Commentary

Volume Eighty, Number Four, October 1985

Is There Now, or Has There Ever Been, Such a Thing as Totalitarianism?

Walter Laqueur

The Cult of Hiroshima
André Ryerson

Reading Primo Levi
Fernanda Eberstadt

What Nairobi Wrought
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Who Killed the CIA?
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"Our Genius": Norman Mailer & the Intellectuals
Carol Iannone

Books: Daniel Pipes / Stephen Schwartz / Brigitte Berger / Ronald Bailey / Mary Tedeschi

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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

Nicaragua

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Nicaraguan Harvest" [July] Mark Falcoff points out that "in some ways what has happened in Nicaragua is not much different from what occurred in Cuba some twenty years earlier." But he fails to mention one of the more important similarities. In both cases, the previous regime was subject to an arms embargo by the United States. Further, in both cases the United States did its best, through international pressure, to make this arms embargo an international one. I am not an expert on Latin America, but it is my (possibly ill-informed) opinion that the arms embargo handicapped Somoza and Batista, but that they probably would have been overthrown anyway. In the Far East there was a more striking example in the embargo put on the Chinese Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek after the great Nationalist victory at Ssu-ping Kai. It was clearly a major factor in the fall of Chiang Kai-shek and the establishment of the Communist government, although whether it was decisive is a subject of legitimate debate.

The regimes of Chiang Kai-shek, Batista, and Somoza were far from models of good government. Nevertheless, in each of the three cases they were better than what succeeded them. It is ironic that the United States fought for the far from perfect governments of South Korea and Vietnam in order to prevent Communist expansion, but actually took steps to improve the probability of Communist expansion in China, Cuba, and Nicaragua.

GORDON TULLOCK
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Mark Falcoff's "Nicaraguan Harvest," I took the trouble to reread his earlier COMMENTARY article, "How to Understand Central America" [September 1984]. In both pieces, his political points are very well taken and he cites relevant dates and events with care and accuracy. But, as he says in his previous article, ". . . only a very small percentage of Americans have the interest or the time to think much about" events and issues in Latin America.

As one who has lived in Latin America and who is intimately acquainted with friends who have spent most of their adult lives there, I would like to make a few basic observations.

There have been some 150 "revolutions" in 150 years, somewhere or other "south of the border." However one may rationalize about (or try to wish away) such persisting patterns, and however justified many such upheavals (or collapsings) are, I think it is time that North Americans quit kidding ourselves about Latin America and "democracy," "free elections," and "good government.". . .

The lands and peoples of Latin America have been bypassed by the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment, the American and French Revolutions, and have been victimized by the Industrial and now by the Russian Revolution. And we in North America have due cause for grave reservations, if not alarm, about more Cubas in our backyard. . . .

But short of issuing a nuclear-backed ultimatum to the Soviet Union and Cuba that any and every plane, ship, or submarine which goes past longitude so and so and latitude such and such will be turned back forthwith or sunk, does anyone really think that events in Nicaragua—or in Mexico very soon—will turn out any differently from the way things have always gone in Latin America? I detect in Mr. Falcoff's very title, "Nicaraguan Harvest," and in his concluding, not very hopeful, remarks a rather clear realization of this fact. No matter whom we support they will in turn wind up eagerly oppressing their own peoples and looting their own lands, as the Sandinistas are now doing in Nicaragua. This is why the U.S. is on the wrong side, no matter which side or faction we may support, or wish to see take power. But only those of us who have actually lived in Latin America seem to be aware of this basic fact. . . .

FREDERICK ALLEN ASHER
Fallbrook, California

MARK FALCOFF writes:

Gordon Tullock's point about arms embargoes is an interesting one, but begs one fundamental question, at least in the case of Nicaragua: if such governments as

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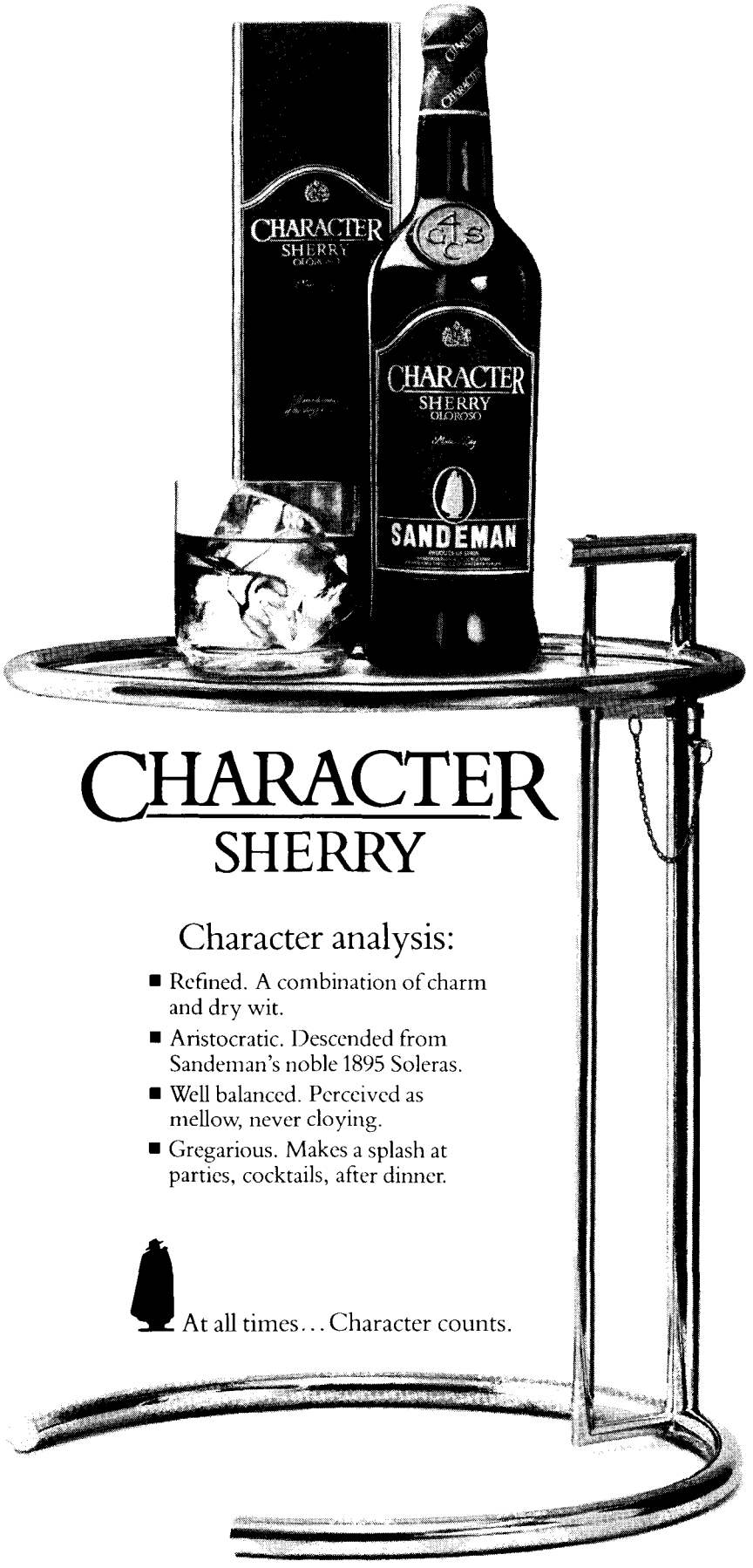
Somoza's "probably would have been overthrown anyway"—then by whom? By 1979 there was no alternative to Somoza *except* the armed formations of the FSLN. Timing is crucial here. The Carter administration had tried earlier to get Somoza to step down, or at least to hold serious discussions with moderate and conservative opposition forces; had he done so, say in 1977 or 1978, the whole point about arms embargoes would have been academic, and the FSLN would be a mere footnote to history.

It is probably worth emphasizing that in the case of both Cuba and Nicaragua, the arms embargoes were imposed at the very last minute. No doubt they had a devastating psychological impact, but their role in the concrete "balance of forces" was minimal.

Frederick Allen Asher's observations make me a bit uncomfortable, since they are in some ways a conservative restatement of the notion —dear to the liberal Left—that "history" is an implacable goddess before whom all rebellion is futile. (Of course, for the latter, "history" means Marxist revolutions in the Third World, while for Mr. Asher it means governments "eagerly oppressing their own peoples and looting their own lands," under whatever ideological label happens to be fashionable at the moment.)

I think it is wrong to assume that there is no such thing as progress in the—forgive me—19th-century bourgeois sense of that term, even in countries unfortunate enough not to have had a Protestant Reformation, French Revolution, etc. Nothing in the history of El Salvador prepared us for the constructive, hopeful developments of the last three or four years, and if one thinks about it, there is little in the history of Italy, Portugal, and Spain which would have led us to anticipate a mere forty years ago the kind of civilized, democratic governments which those countries now enjoy.

Moreover, Mr. Asher's observations could be used to argue that what we are seeing in Nicaragua is merely an *aggiornamento* of the traditional political style there—and that is clearly not true. What makes the Sandinista regime a threat to its neighbors, and ultimately to the United States, is not its specifically Nicaraguan features, but quite the opposite: its voluntary enlistment in the Soviet alliance. Precisely how to deal with this un-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pleasant fact is a source of serious controversy—indeed, it is, in a way, the heart of the present debate over aid to the *contras*. But the situation itself is undeniable, and must be faced.

Yiddish

To the Editor of Commentary:

Ruth R. Wisse's article, "The Politics of Yiddish" [July], is absolutely perfect. I have never read anything more just, wise, and balanced about Yiddish. A real wonder!

Simon Markish
Geneva, Switzerland

To the Editor of Commentary:

In her article Ruth R. Wisse refers to the First Yiddish Language Conference in Czernowitz, Bukovina, in 1908. Readers who seek more information on the conference, on its leading participants (Nathan Birnbaum, Y. L. Peretz, M. Mieses, and Chaim Zhitlowsky), and on most of the "political" issues pertaining to Yiddish, will find it in my book, *Architects of Yiddishism at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977).

Emanuel S. Goldsmith
Queens College-CUNY
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

Since the *Freiheit* is mentioned in Ruth R. Wisse's "The Politics of Yiddish," permit me to comment.

Mrs. Wisse divides the Yiddishists of some years back into two groups. One considered that

> Yiddishism could not exclude the Jewish bourgeoisie. A second group objected strongly. The national character of Yiddish, they said, had to do exclusively with its source in the life of Jewish workers, farmers, and the small tradespeople who tomorrow could be among the ranks of the workers or the unemployed. One of the most eloquent proponents of the latter view was the Yiddish poet, H. Leivick.

To ascribe such an attitude to the great Yiddish poet H. Leivick is questionable, but this, we are told, was "the centrist position." To prove this point, Mrs. Wisse states:

> When Leivick complained that the *Freiheit*, the Yiddish-language Communist paper, lacked any appreciation of artistic merit and was forcing Yiddish writers into a proletarian straitjacket, the editors mocked his fastidiousness.

And this, according to Mrs. Wisse, is what the editors of the "Communist" *Freiheit* told H. Leivick: "Doesn't Leivick understand that one's attitude toward Yiddish is not the most pressing problem of the local Communist movement?"

Now, I am willing to assume that this is a correct quotation from the *Freiheit*. But is Mrs. Wisse under no obligation to supply her readers with a *date*, inform them when this statement was made and in what connection, and point out the reason Leivick made his charge against a paper of which he himself was a contributor, together with (among others) such well-known Yiddish writers as Abraham Reisen and Moishe Nadir, who is so highly praised by Mrs. Wisse as an extraordinary Yiddish artist?

H. Leivick left the *Freiheit* in 1929, not for artistic reasons: he disagreed with the policy of the paper on the Arab attacks on Jews in Palestine that year. Later, Leivick was an active participant, with the then-*Freiheit* editor M.J. Olgin, in the First World Congress for Jewish Culture held in Paris in September 1937. Present at this congress were delegations from Jewish communities in twenty-three countries, including North and South America, Europe (France, England, Belgium, Austria, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Rumania), as well as South Africa and *Eretz Yisrael* (Palestine).

The manifesto issued by that congress, composed by a committee consisting of M.J. Olgin, H. Leivick, and Ben Adir, a prominent Jewish cultural personality in Paris, had as one of its main slogans: the Jewish people cannot be separated from Jewish culture; Jewish culture cannot be separated from the Jewish people. The emphasis here is not on class but people, the Jewish people. Besides Olgin and Leivick, Joseph Opatoshu was also present as a member of the U.S. delegation, the same Opatoshu who is highly praised in Mrs. Wisse's article, and correctly so. Opatoshu delivered an important speech at the congress, as did Leivick, Olgin, Chaim Zhitlowsky, and others (Zhitlowsky was unable to make the trip to Paris; his speech was read by the poet Z. Weinper, a member of the American delegation).

Mrs. Wisse mentions the 1908 Czernowitz conference—truly a historic conference, but her article completely ignores the 1937 Paris congress, which was the biggest of the international Yiddish gatherings, and which was held at a time when the millions of Yiddish-speaking Jews who later perished in the Holocaust were still alive. Could it be that politics are the reason for the omission of this important congress?

Mrs. Wisse is a teacher of Yiddish literature at McGill University in Montreal. She may not follow the Yiddish press in New York (three Yiddish weeklies). But she has no right to mislead the readers of Commentary as to the character of the *Morning Freiheit*, which for nearly thirty years now has been an independent, progressive Jewish labor and people's newspaper, although in earlier years the *Freiheit* did support a party line. That support ended in 1956, as it did for millions of other people, with the publication of the well-known speech of Nikita Khrushchev regarding the criminal misdeeds of Stalin. The record shows that after the *Freiheit* published the text of Khrushchev's revelations and conducted a prolonged discussion of this document among our readers, a national conference consisting of *Freiheit* committees in various cities, the *Freiheit* editorial staff, outside contributors (writers, poets), and the National Management Committee was held in New York in January 1957—over twenty-eight years ago! That conference unanimously decided that the *Morning Freiheit* should become—and it did become—"an independent, progressive Jewish labor and people's newspaper." It is possible that Mrs. Wisse is not acquainted with the character of the *Morning Freiheit* and unwittingly applies false labels to it, or is this, too, part of her politics?

One final point in regard to her remarks about Leivick. In 1950 Leivick received an Honorary Doctorate from Hebrew Union College. In 1961 he was awarded a medal by the National Jewish Welfare Board, for his "literary creativity for the last fifty years [which has] won him recognition as the greatest Jewish poet and playwright of our time."

It is puzzling how a teacher of Yiddish literature can misrepresent Leivick's role to the extent that Ruth R. Wisse does in her article. Jewish workers and small trades-

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people—and women generally—did play a basic role in the upsurge of Yiddish, as pointed out by Y. L. Peretz at the 1908 Czernowitz conference. But to single out Leivick as the proponent of this role, to the exclusion of his concern with the Jewish people generally, does not tally with his creativity as a poet and playwright. The formulation made at the 1937 Paris congress, of which Leivick was a co-author, is the correct one: the Jewish people cannot be separated from Jewish culture; Jewish culture cannot be separated from the Jewish people.

PAUL NOVICK
Editor, *Morning Freiheit*
New York City

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

I am deeply grateful to Simon Markish for his letter.

Since Emanuel S. Goldsmith is providing us with bibliography, let us not omit Joshua Fishman's significant account of the 1908 conference in his book, *Never Say Die!* (Mouton, 1981).

The *Freiheit* and Paul Novick may have broken with Stalinism, but not with its attitude to history or to political discourse: the attitude, that is to say, according to which history is clay in the hands of the ideological potter and discourse is hitting your opponent over the head with the finished product.

I divided Yiddishism of the interwar period into three positions, not two, else the term "centrist" would have had no meaning. When Leivick wrote for the *Freiheit* in the late 1920's he was fighting a running battle against the anti-Communist Yiddish writers on the one hand, and against his newspaper on the other hand, which was allowing more loyal writers, like Moishe Nadir, to criticize him in its pages. Leivick wanted the Yiddish writer exempted from the discipline that bound the rest of the Communist camp, and it was in this context that Shakhne Epstein (later exposed as a Soviet agent) accused him in the *Freiheit* of October 26, 1927, of hyper-refinement. The paragraph reads in full:

> Comrade Leivick declares that he considers himself a Communist, that he is coming toward Communism and that he wants to approach still closer. We don't for a moment doubt Leivick's sincerity, just as we don't doubt the sincerity of Moishe Nadir and other writers who come to us to serve Communism with their art. But doesn't Leivick understand that the attitude toward Yiddish is not the most pressing problem in the local Communist movement? In reality the problem does not exist for Communists. It may sound odd to Leivick and his kind, but there it is.

Of course Leivick broke with the *Freiheit* in August 1929. Even at this remove, Mr. Novick is shy of reminding us that the "policy" of the paper, once it had received its instructions from Moscow, was to blame the Jews of Palestine for the Arab riots that were killing them, and to hail these pogroms as the beginnings of the Arab revolution. When he heard of the *Freiheit*'s position, Leivick wrote:

> The *Freiheit* takes the part of the Arabs, deliberately takes its stand against the victims, justifies and wishes to *encourage* the dreadful pogrom, interpreting it as revolution. Even if it is revolution, you have to be simply insane to take such a terrible stand against the Jewish *yishuv* [community in Palestine], the workers' *yishuv* that with its own sweat and life cultivated the land. One can be against the Zionist organization, against the Balfour Declaration, and I am. But to dance like demons on the blood of innocent victims—that leaves me speechless. What should we do, we Yiddish writers who are for Communism, for the Soviet Union, what should we do?

One of the things that Leivick and Menahem Boreisho, recipient of this letter, did do was to found their own weekly. It was here, well *after* the break with the *Freiheit*, that Leivick defined the position on Yiddish that I summarized in my article. The break with the *Freiheit*, far from turning these Yiddish writers against Communism, as one might have thought, made them all the more eager to defer to the moral authority of the Soviet Union, for now that they were no longer part of the *Freiheit* they had to work harder to maintain their distance from the Zionist and "right-wing" socialist circles of the

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Jewish Daily Forward. This is the ideological balance that Leivick tried to maintain throughout the 1930's, until the Hitler-Stalin pact created another crisis of disaffection.

Why should Leivick not have attended the 1937 World Congress for Jewish Culture which was enthusiastically promoted by the Communists as an element of their interest at that time in a common front? The conference did present a serious problem for the *anti*-Communist Yiddish writers, many of whom publicly dissociated themselves from it, but the pro-Communists participated, though Leivick is said to have had misgivings. As for Leivick's undisputed prominence, that is precisely what prompted me to take him as the example of what can only ironically be referred to as Yiddish "centrism."

As a "teacher of Yiddish literature"—a concept that seems to fill Mr. Novick with particular scorn—I am neither a hagiographer nor an apologist. The *Freiheit* and Leivick clearly stated their views about the Jews and the Yiddish language during the period between the wars, and it is these I described in my article.

Allen Ginsberg

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his article "Allen Ginsberg Then and Now" [July], Robert Richman mistakenly—and repeatedly—refers to James Breslin, the author of a book called *From Modern to Contemporary: American Poetry, 1945-1965* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), as Paul Breslin. Now there *is* another critic of contemporary poetry named Paul Breslin, who teaches at Northwestern, but he has nothing but the name "Breslin" in common with James E. B. Breslin, who is professor of English at Berkeley.

It is not surprising that Mr. Richman makes this error since he distorts facts and resorts to innuendo throughout his article. Having myself written a long review-essay on Allen Ginsberg's *Collected Poems* for *American Poetry Review* ("A Lion in Our Living Room," March/April 1985), I do not wish here to go over the same ground. But I do want to protest some of Mr. Richman's statements and raise some larger questions about poetry (and art) reviewing in Commentary.

Like a number of other magazine reviewers, Mr. Richman is indignant that Allen Ginsberg should actually have received "a six-figure contract" for his book, and that the book itself is an elegant "two-inch-thick extravaganza." "Never," writes Mr. Richman, "has an aesthetic of obsolescence been so fastidiously preserved." Why is it so upsetting that a poet of Ginsberg's reputation should actually earn some money or that his *Collected Poems* should be handsomely produced? Even if Mr. Richman considers Ginsberg a negligible poet, surely even he must concede that Ginsberg's work has enormous historical interest. Geraldine Ferraro, whose autobiography strikes me as having virtually no interest, received a "six-figure contract" for her book. So have any number of film stars. Why not Allen Ginsberg, a man hardly noted for his wealth or his lavish "life style"?

Ginsberg, Mr. Richman tells us,

> is . . . part of the immensely talented generation that burst on the poetry scene in the years following World War II. But while most of that generation's better poets—among them Richard Wilbur, Anthony Hecht, and Howard Nemerov—were of a decidedly formalist persuasion, Ginsberg was the freewheeling experimental rebel.

This sounds straightforward enough, but the fact is, as anyone who has studied the subject knows, that the chief difference between the postwar generation of American poets and their predecessors was precisely the abandonment of formalism. James *a.k.a.* Paul Breslin, whom Mr. Richman cites as his authority on Ginsberg's literary subterfuges, provides one of the best accounts we have of this "opening of the field." Indeed, Breslin discusses Richard Wilbur's poetry as a prime example of the narrow and academic formalism that was to be eroded by the innovations of the 50's and 60's. Mr. Richman need not, of course, agree with this assessment, but in informing Commentary readers what "most of that generation's better poets" were doing, he might at least make clear that Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Robert Creeley, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Jerome Rothenberg, James Wright, W.S. Merwin—the list goes on and on—were doing no such thing.

But then literary history is not Mr. Richman's strong suit. He reports, with seeming objectivity, that between 1944 and 1946, Ginsberg formed "attachments" to the likes of William S. Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, Neal Cassady, and Herbert Huncke—"drug addicts and criminals all." A curiously philistine statement, given that Burroughs is considered by most scholars in the field as one of the major writers of the period whereas Neal Cassady was not a writer at all, only the object of Ginsberg's and Kerouac's love. Never mind, the aim is to show that Ginsberg's friends were all "drug addicts and criminals." So much for Ginsberg's friendship with Creeley and Duncan, Ashbery and O'Hara, so much for his remarkably learned essays on poetry and poetics collected in *Composed on the Tongue* and *Allen Verbatim*. To read Ginsberg on metrics or on Pound's syntax is to marvel that a man who took all those drugs and had all those adventures, survived to write with such clarity and vigor. Ginsberg would understand, for instance, that the 1952 poem called "A Crazy Spiritual," which Mr. Richman dismisses as "derivative—this time, of Williams," is quite unlike Williams's free verse in its adoption of folk-ballad rhythms and argot.

But then Mr. Richman isn't really interested in Ginsberg's poetry. He is interested in the Ginsberg legend, the dreadful story about what happened at the Naropa Institute in 1974 (a story that suffers from the worst sort of journalistic overkill), and the stories about Ginsberg's testimony on LSD at the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee hearing in June 1966. It is rather like writing about Rimbaud and recording only his use of obscenities at public gatherings, his smoking of hashish, and his duel with Verlaine. Having, in any case, discussed none of the poet's major works with any degree of seriousness, having said nothing of Ginsberg's humor, which may well be the most lasting quality of his poetry, or of his powers, quite unlike those of Kerouac and Cassady, to *survive* and to change, and having never asked himself for a moment why Allen Ginsberg's poetry is admired in Japan as in Sweden, in Yugoslavia as in Israel, Mr. Richman returns to the dreaded recognition that this poet is "the proud holder of a six-figure book deal," once again refers to James

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Breslin as Paul Breslin, and ends on this note: "One need not read between the lines of Allen Ginsberg's life and work to find sleaziness abounding."

It is all sadly dispiriting, especially for someone like me who is a faithful COMMENTARY subscriber and reader. For years I have been pondering this question: why is it that the people who have the most clear-headed sense of political realities, who understand, as do most COMMENTARY contributors, what is at stake in our world, are willing to tolerate the philistine banalities of a Robert Richman? Conversely, why are avant-garde artists and critics—and contrary to Mr. Richman and your other reviewers, I believe the avant-garde is alive and well—so blind when it comes to politics? The current gulf between political and social realities on the one hand and the art scene on the other seems to be so great that perhaps the only way to avoid the Ezra Pound trap (or, for that matter, the Allen Ginsberg trap) would be to practice some humility regarding fields we seem not to understand. It has long struck me that COMMENTARY . . . just doesn't understand what is happening in new music, performance, photography, poetry. Indeed, COMMENTARY seems to have no more understanding of Ginsberg's poetic mode than Ginsberg evidently had of the events in Prague in 1965.

But just as left-wing poets shout obscenities at Caspar Weinberger, even as they don't have the foggiest notion of how he, or anyone else, might actually run the Pentagon, so the right-wing "critics" and reviewers in your pages regularly expose themselves as simply lacking the ability to describe and analyze what happens in a literary text. No one who has read *Howl!* with even minimal attention could describe it, as does Mr. Richman, as "an ode to sexual, social, and poetic freedom."

MARJORIE PERLOFF
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his "Allen Ginsberg Then and Now" Robert Richman refers to an essay of mine—"Allen Ginsberg: The Origins of 'Howl' and 'Kaddish'"—and to my book, *From Modern to Contemporary: American Poetry, 1945-1965*. Never mind that Mr. Richman appropriates my own basically sympathetic account of Ginsberg to his attack on the poet. That's a common enough form of dishonesty. But Mr. Richman also identifies a "Paul Breslin" as the author of the essay and the book. Yes, Robert, there is a Paul Breslin, but he didn't write either of these two pieces. Why don't you *read* instead of seeing what you expect to find?

Mr. Richman finds "sleaziness abounding" in Ginsberg's work. What's Mr. Richman's word for someone who can't correctly transcribe the name of an author twice in one essay? Mine is dope.

JAMES E. B. BRESLIN
University of California
Berkeley, California

ROBERT RICHMAN writes:

I apologize to James E.B. Breslin for confusing him with Paul Breslin. He has every right to feel indignant. Marjorie Perloff's indignation is another matter.

First of all, nowhere in the course of my article do I suggest that I am against six-figure book contracts. I like nothing better than to see authors prosper, especially down-and-out authors. But Allen Ginsberg has routinely derided capitalism—indeed, the very concept of money—for the last thirty years. Is it really that unfair of me to criticize such brazen hypocrisy? I agree with Mrs. Perloff that Geraldine Ferraro's biography is of less interest than Ginsberg's *Collected Poems*. What this has to do with my argument that Ginsberg is a hypocrite is beyond me. If anything, it supports my case.

Mrs. Perloff is correct to assume that she and I will disagree about who the best postwar poets are. Evidently we also disagree about the status of William Burroughs as a writer. She contends that "most scholars in the field" regard Burroughs as one of the "major writers of the period." Coming to "the field" not as a scholar but as a reader, I must confess I find Burroughs to be of some interest but hardly a preeminent figure. But then I am quite mystified by what "scholars in the field" admire in contemporary poetry and fiction. So many of these "scholars"—and, clearly, Mrs. Perloff is straining to be counted among them—have the taste and sensibility of a telephone pole, at least when it comes to recent poetry. No doubt it takes the special insight of a "scholar in the field" to find Ginsberg's essays "remarkably learned."

Mrs. Perloff accuses me of focusing on the Ginsberg legend at the expense of the poetry. This is blatantly false, as any reader of my article can testify. But as the legend is exactly what Ginsberg has tirelessly promoted through the years, it would have been no disservice if I had concentrated solely on the legend. If anyone can be held responsible for the tendency of critics to discuss Ginsberg's endless series of attention-getting actions, it is the Professor of Publicity himself.

Mrs. Perloff castigates me for not liking Ginsberg's poetry, while it "is admired in Japan as in Sweden, in Yugoslavia as in Israel." What a novel idea! The next time we want to know who our best and most important poets are, we'll ask the Yugoslavs. Is this another of the preposterous notions rife among "scholars in the field"? If so, the university is in an even sorrier state than one had thought.

But most preposterous of all is Mrs. Perloff's automatic equation of my dislike of Ginsberg's work with a dislike of the "avant-garde." Mrs. Perloff accuses me of being philistine, yet it is the worst kind of philistinism to find in my criticism of Ginsberg a criticism of the "avant-garde." I happen to admire a great deal of the avant-garde, in poetry as in other art forms, but clearly Mrs. Perloff's mind is incapable of tolerating such a notion.

Mrs. Perloff ends her letter by saying that COMMENTARY critics "regularly expose themselves as simply lacking the ability to describe and analyze what happens in a literary text." Since she makes no effort in her letter to contend with my description and analysis of Ginsberg's poetry—not to mention my argument—I have to assume she agrees with most of what I have to say about it. For this I thank her.

Esau and Jacob

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I particularly enjoyed Robert Alter's article, "Scripture and Culture" [August], but was confused by his biblical references on page 48, which seem to be wrong, and

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Featured on PBS:

'The Last Place on Earth'

And
War
Mystery!
River Journeys
Nature
Wonderworks
Creation Of The Universe
Great Performances
Treasure Houses Of Britain
and more inside...

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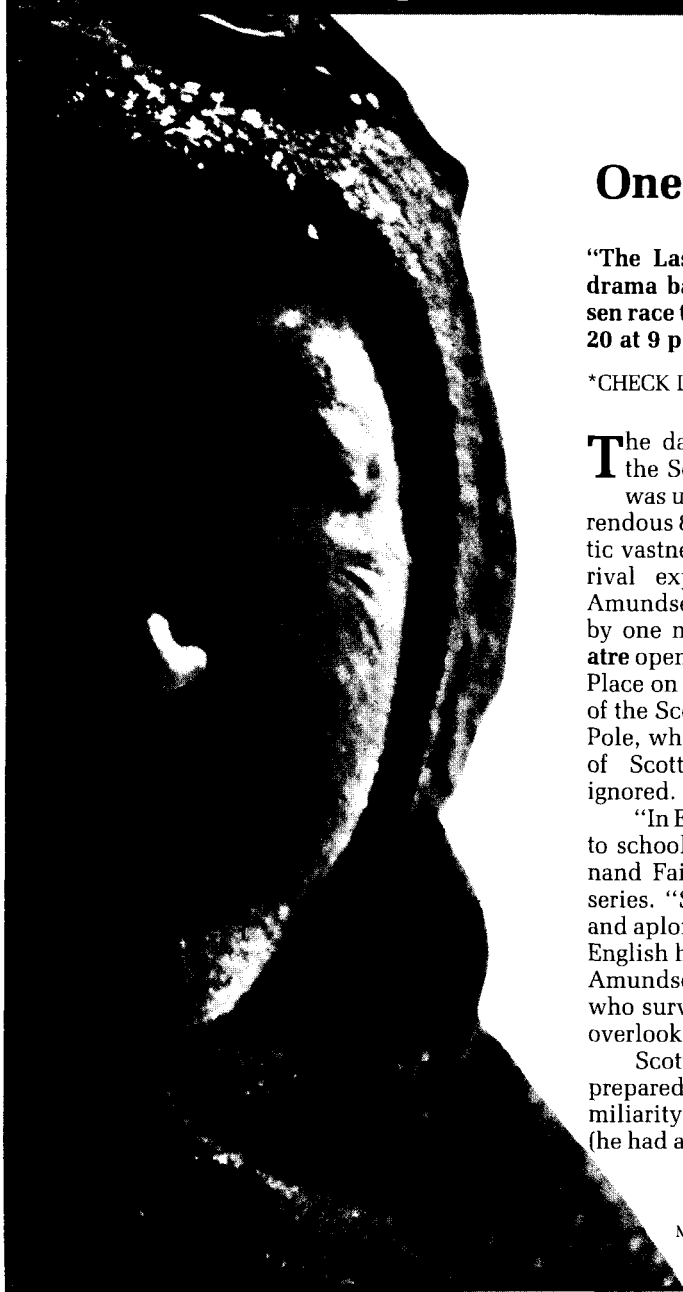
Mobil Masterpiece Theatre



Two Men, One Great Ambition

"The Last Place on Earth," a six-part drama based on the epic Scott-Amundsen race to the South Pole. Starts October 20 at 9 p.m. Eastern Time.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

The day Robert Scott finally reached the South Pole, on January 17, 1912, was undoubtedly the worst of his horrendous 850-mile journey. For in that arctic vastness he found the tent left by his rival explorer, the Norwegian Roald Amundsen, whose team had beaten Scott by one month. **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre** opens its 15th season with "The Last Place on Earth," a six-part dramatization of the Scott-Amundsen race to the South Pole, which reveals a less flattering side of Scott that some historians have ignored.

"In England Scott is held up as a hero to school children," said director Ferdinand Fairfax in an interview about the series. "Scott was brave, full of reserve and aplomb, a perfect gent. He's the ideal English hero. He failed and then he died. Amundsen is held up as a cad, the man who survived by eating the dogs. People overlooked that Scott ate the horses."

Scott, played by Martin Shaw, is ill-prepared for his mission despite his familiarity with the realities of the region (he had a gold medal from the Royal Geo-

Martin Shaw as Scott

Sverre Anker Ousdal as Amundsen

Crystal Anniversary for Mobil Masterpiece Theatre

Fifteen years ago if you made a call on a Sunday night, you probably reached a friend willing to chat. Then, in January of 1971, the lines went cold; if you dared to dial, a voice would inform you that it was impossible to talk—at this very minute Churchill was waging the Battle of Blenheim, or Poldark was bedding Demelza, or Lillie Langtry was risking social ruin by pouring a drink down the back of Edward VII.

Mobil Masterpiece Theatre had arrived; the only voice you wanted to hear on a Sunday night was Alistair Cooke's. And with this arrival, the miniseries was born.

"The First Churchills" (the first **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre** presentation) introduced the miniseries to American TV viewers, who over the next few years began to talk of the dashing Poldark or the homey Mrs. Bridges as though they were members of the family. Miss an episode, and you risked smiling blankly at the talk of next Saturday night's dinner party. (Over the years, **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre** has received many Emmy awards. "Upstairs, Downstairs" alone received seven Emmys, and is the series most often associated with **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre**.)

It was not just that **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre** drew us so firmly into other people's lives; "Ma Perkins" had done that years ago. It was that **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre** did it so well, featuring brilliant performers like Alan Bates, Glenda Jackson, Derek Jacobi, Rosemary Harris, Anna Massey, Anthony Hopkins, and many more. (This season Max Von Sydow in "The Last Place on Earth" and Diana Rigg in "Bleak House" are added to the list.)

Five years ago Mobil, which has been underwriter for **Masterpiece Theatre** since its inception, decided to provide similar backing for "Mystery!" and now when you call a friend on Thursday nights a voice explains that it is tied up helping Sherlock Holmes in his Baker Street digs, or lending a hand to those "Partners in Crime," Tommy and Tuppence. Oh dear.

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©1985 The New Republic, Inc. Written by: Susan Dooley Designed by: Robert Steward

The Mobil Television Season on PBS 1985-86

Masterpieces

Masterpiece Theatre 9pm Sundays, Begins October 13

The Good Soldier The Last Place on Earth The Irish R.M. II
Lord Mountbatten: The Last Viceroy The Tale of Beatrix Potter
Bleak House The Jewel in the Crown By the Sword Divided I

MYSTERIES!

Mystery! 9pm Thursdays, Begins October 24

Death of an Expert Witness Agatha Christie's Miss Marple
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes II Charters & Caldicott
Partners in Crime I & II My Cousin Rachel Praying Mantis
Agatha Christie Mysteries

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Pride of Place: Building the American Dream The Compleat
Gilbert & Sullivan The TV Businessman The Living Planet
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MOBIL MASTERPIECE THEATRE

ANNIVERSARY SEASON 1985-6

Chermayeff & Geismar Associates

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Mobil Masterpiece Theatre

graphical Society for an earlier expedition to the Antarctic). He decides to use mechanical sleds, and we watch as the treads break down and sink through the ice; in addition to sled dogs, he uses ponies to carry equipment, but then has to cart their food along (unlike the dogs, the horses don't eat blubber); he brings skis for his men, but they end up abandoning them because they don't know how to use them.

Scott does little else to inspire the crew's confidence. One of his men, lying in bed with a bandage over his eyes, growls, "Ten years ago, when I was 20, I drove a team of dogs across Siberia 2,000 miles. I learned the narrowness of the line man walks between farce and tragedy. Tell him [Scott] that a man who sits in his tent in the Antarctic and whines about the weather is unfit to lead." The cold, however, seems to dampen everyone's spirits, and Amundsen, played by Sverre Anker Ousdal, is shown arousing hostilities in his men as well. (Max Von Sydow plays Amundsen's mentor, Fridtjof Nansen.)

Scott's wife, Kathleen, an independent woman who pursued her own interests as an accomplished sculptor, is played by Susan Wooldridge (Daphne Manners in "The Jewel and the Crown," which will be rerun later this season). Kathleen is the dominant force in the marriage, pushing Scott to pursue his explorations. When he becomes discouraged with all the arrangements for the expedition, she snaps, "It's not detail. It's destiny!"

The expanse of ice and snow that contributed to the film's stark beauty led to special problems. "The snow had to be unbroken. There couldn't be a lot of footprints at the South Pole, so whenever we shot the expedition coming toward us, we had to loop way back so that they could come forward over fresh snow," said Fairfax. He also came to appreciate the problems Scott and Amundsen had with crews and cold weather. The film crew spent eight weeks in Canada's Frobisher Bay and two in Greenland, where temperatures ranged from minus 20 to minus 59. "People always say when you get into those temperatures, it's the machinery that lets you down. It isn't. It's the people. People get slow and grouchy about things."

Some English viewers inevitably were unhappy with Fairfax's portrayal of Scott and his wife. (Imagine Neil Armstrong climbing out of Apollo 11 and stumbling over a Russian guidebook, and you'll be better able to understand British resentment toward Amundsen.) But, said Fairfax, "It seemed legitimate to look at who this man really was. . . . Every word that we could base on what someone wrote or said, we did. Those interested in maintaining the Scott myth didn't like this at all."

The undisputed facts are the bleak outcome of the return trip. On February 17 one of Scott's men fell descending the Beardmore glacier and died soon after. Blizzards slowed the rest of the party and food began to run out. On March 17 another of the men walked out alone into the blizzard to die. The three survivors covered ten more miles and then another blizzard sealed them into their tent, where, out of food and only 11 miles from fresh supplies, they died.

On March 29, Scott wrote a final entry in his diary: "Every day we have been ready to start for our depot 11 miles away, but outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. . . . We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far. It seems a pity but I do not think I can write anymore."

When Amundsen returned to England, he met with a reception as icy as the land he'd just left. On **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre**'s 15th season, in a film that is beautifully photographed and impressively acted, he is finally given credit for being the first man to reach "The Last Place on Earth."

Presented by WGBH.
Funded by Mobil Corporation.

Bleak House

**"Bleak House," an eight-part drama of the Dickens classic. Begins December 1 at 9 p.m.*
*check local listings**

The scourge of lawyers and legalese is nothing new, as this masterful adaptation of Dickens's novel* Bleak House *shows. The case of Jarndyce v. Jarndyce—about the complicated execution of a will—goes on and on, drawing more and more people in its wake. Characters with mysterious pasts and names like Mrs. Pardiggle, Prince Turveydrop, and Guppy keep popping up as this Victorian world sinks into decay.

The story should have particular appeal to the American audience, knee-deep as the country is in lawyers. Dickens uses the law case to show how society has got itself by the tail, chasing about in circles instead of moving forward. One of the unwilling participants explains: "The lawyers have twisted it into such a state of bedevilment that the original merits of the case have long disappeared from the face of the earth." Diana Rigg stars as the restless Lady Dedlock, whose "weariness of soul lies before her, as it lies behind," and Denholm Elliot is The Guardian. Lawyers, laymen et al. are urged to watch.

Diana Rigg in "Bleak House"

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War, the horrible but inevitable response to conflict, has been with us at least since civilization. It once affected mainly soldiers and leaders, but in the last two centuries has escalated to alarming proportions. This sobering eight-part series, "War: A Commentary by Gwynne Dyer," chronicles the last 200 years of man's fight against man.

The programs were shot on location in ten countries, including the U.S. and USSR, and we see the armed forces of six nations. Dyer interviews a range of people knowledgeable about warfare—historians, philosophers, prominent generals, young recruits. In the second episode, for example, a group of young men arrives at Parris Island, and they're turned into "highly motivated truly dedicated rompin' stompin' bloodthirsty kill-crazy United States Marine Corps recruits, SIR!" The poor young men, heads like billiard balls, eyes terrified, struggle to become soldiers as their socks droop, their rifles get dirty, as they dangle from ropes, scramble up nets, or set up tents ("You only did one thing wrong—it's inside out").

"I guess you could say in a way I brainwash 'em a little bit," one drill instructor admits. "You couldn't survive in a combat situation with the morals you have in everyday life," says another. "If you get paid to look down your sights and pull a trigger and kill a man, that's what you do."

"The secret of basic training," said Dyer later during a discussion about the program, "is that it's not really about teaching people at all; it's about changing people to do things they wouldn't ordinarily do. The recruit is stripped of all evidence of his civilian identity—his hair, his clothes, everything that makes him an individual."

If the common soldier is merely following orders, then is war the fault of the officer—the one who, according to writer Paul Fussell, knows precisely "how much of his soldiers he can use up and get the job done"? No, explained Dyer; by agreeing to become soldiers, all of them agree to die when asked to—by whomever makes the ultimate decision to fight.

"Here you have a bunch of people who you pay and train to kill foreigners. Put that way, it doesn't sound like the kind of profession you'd like your child to go into.

"But the thing that gives it some dignity is that they also have to be willing to be killed. In the end, I think the problem is the sovereign state. How do you get to the point where you can surrender some of your sovereignty? After the First World War, we had scared ourselves so badly we formed the League of Nations and that didn't work too well. Then after the Second World War, the governments got together in the United Nations. The writing's on the wall. It says, 'March barefoot to Mongolia.' It's a hard task but it's pretty clear it's the direction we have to go in."

What Dyer does, and does well, is show how good and intelligent people of

The Eight Episodes

1 Episode one: "The Road to Total War." Dyer shows how modern nationalism and modern technology have joined to change war from battles between small groups of professional soldiers to the destruction of millions. With paintings, photographs, and film, this episode documents the terrible excitement of war—and the terrible consequence.

2 Episode two: "Anybody's Son Will Do." Dyer visits Parris Island and follows a band of green recruits as they are turned into professional soldiers in this sometimes moving, often wry segment.

3 Episode three: "The Profession of Arms." Here we see the remarkable similarity in military jobs all over the world. The military officers of various countries may have more in common with each other than with their own countrymen. In one of many interviews, General Ben-Chanaan of the Israeli Defense Forces speaks candidly of a truth all officers learn: you can do everything right and still get it wrong—lose the battle and your men.

4 Episode four: "The Deadly Game of Nations." Dyer looks at why governments—and the people they represent—feel the need to keep armies and fight wars. Israel, with its struggle to hold its own among the Arab nations of the Middle East, is the focus.

5 Episode five: "Keeping the Old Game Alive." Dyer documents NATO's conventional war games, held every autumn in central Europe as the combined forces of 15 member countries conduct an elaborate dress rehearsal for World War III.

6 Episode six: "Notes on Nuclear War." Dyer follows the development of the arms race, from Hiroshima to the Cuban missile crisis to the current nuclear stalemate.

7 Episode seven: "Goodbye War." From the League of Nations to the United Nations, Dyer talks about why efforts to achieve a worldwide peace have failed.

8 Episode eight: "The Knife Edge of Deterrence." This final segment was not part of the original series; it was produced by station KCTS in Seattle, and hosted by Edwin Newman. It presents alternative viewpoints, focusing on deterrence, from Truman's post-WW II administration to Reagan's "Star Wars" plan.

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Mobil
Masterpiece
Theatre
presents:

The Last Place on Earth

Scott and Amundsen
both wanted to be first
to the Pole.
One of them won.
The other became a hero.

Starring Sverre Anker Ousdal,
Martin Shaw, Max Von Sydow,
Susan Wooldridge
A six-part series begins Sunday
October 20 at 9PM on PBS
Check local listings
Host: Alistair Cooke

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MOBIL MASTERPIECE THEATRE 15TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON 1985-86

Based on The Last Place on Earth by Roland Huntford, published by Atheneum and available in bookstores. CC Closed captioned for hearing impaired viewers

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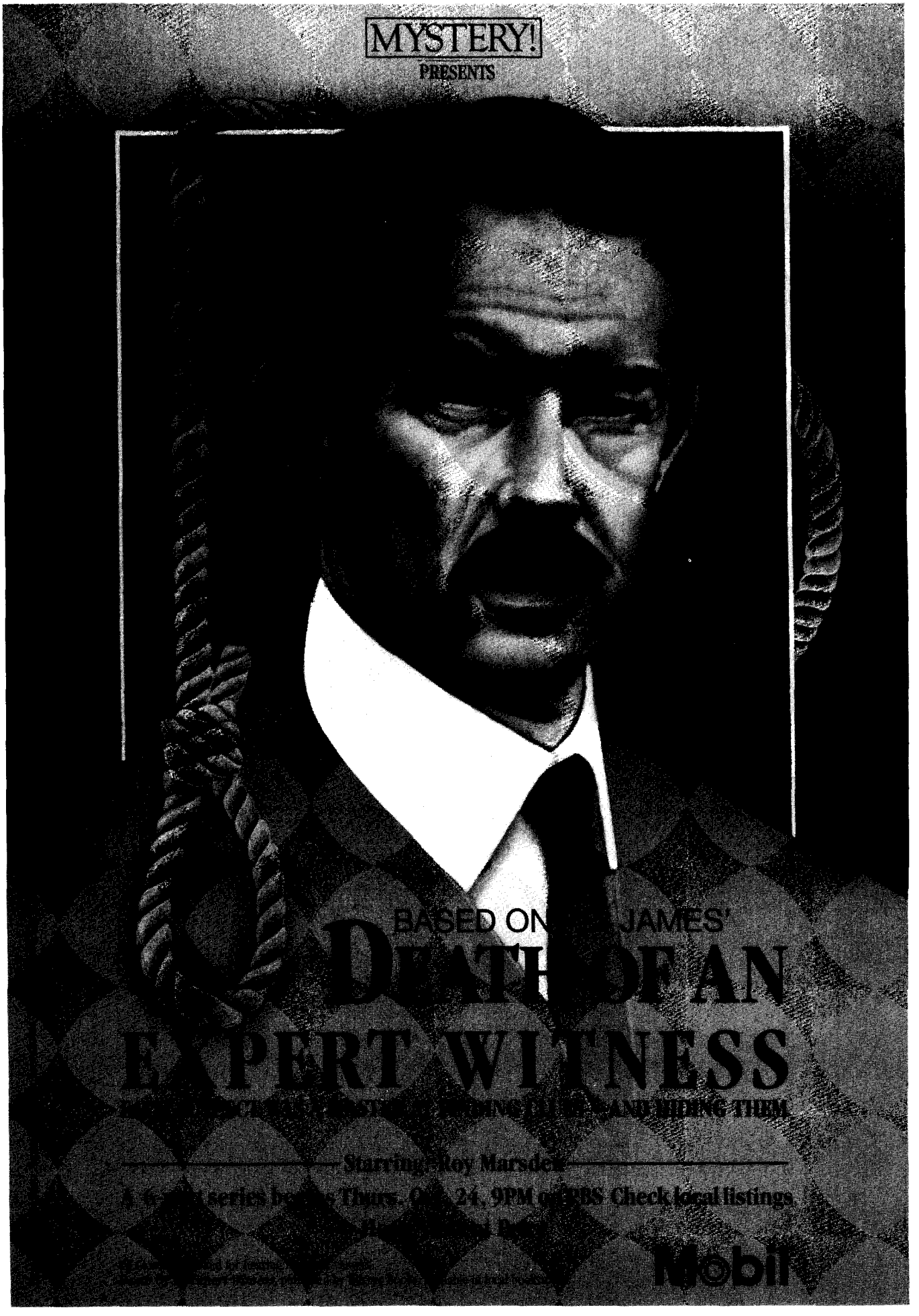

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varying professions and responsibilities slip step-by-step into the throes of war. He lets the interviewees speak without setting them up to prove his point. His warriors are not evil; they are men doing the job they've been asked to do.

"It's a complicated and slippery business which can't be blamed on arms merchants or ideologues. If I got it right, the series ought to be an analysis rather than a polemic."

"We've gone on fighting wars all through our history because we've been willing to pay the price," said Dyer. "Now the price is too high."

Not everyone agrees on the price, and there will always be differences when determining what's worth fighting for. Dyer's enlightening commentary, however, graphically demonstrates how terribly costly anything worth fighting for is.

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada and KCTS. Funded by Public Television Stations (PTV Stations) and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Gwynne Dyer, who writes an international affairs column that appears in 200 newspapers in 50 countries, is well qualified to talk of war. His military experience includes service as a reserve officer in three navies (Canadian, American, British), two years of teaching military affairs at the Canadian Forces College, Toronto, and four years as a senior lecturer in war studies at Britain's Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. "War: A Commentary by Gwynne Dyer" grew out of a radio program called "Goodbye War," which aired in Canada in 1979 and has since been broadcast in seven countries, including the United States.

Dyer, who lives in London with his wife and two teenage sons, concludes that we can no longer afford a tit-for-tat world. "Truth is," says Dyer, "we love our countries too much for their own good. And for ours."

Who watches what...

Irving Kristol, editor of *The Public Interest*, likes the British imports best—"Brideshead Revisited" and **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre**'s "The Jewel in the Crown." He also watches **The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour**.

William F. Buckley, editor of *National Review* and host of PBS's **Firing Line**, doesn't have much time for television, but enjoyed "Upstairs, Downstairs," which was presented on **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre.**

Mayor Ed Koch likes to relax in his library and watch **Mobil Masterpiece Theatre**.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan tunes in regularly to **The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour**.

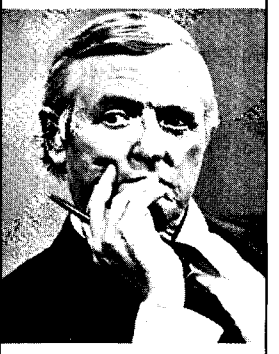
Senator Jay Rockefeller, whose wife, Sharon, is on the board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, obviously watches a lot of public TV. His favorite: **Washington Week in Review**.

Secretary of Transportation **Elizabeth Dole** likes to settle down with **The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour**.

John Updike says, "My wife and I have both been very attentive to the program on China and we're addicted to **Mystery!** Some years ago I liked Kenneth Clark's 'Civilisation' and 'The Shock of the New,' and there's one about nature—David Attenborough's 'The Living Planet'—which I enjoy. There are times when you can see one too many praying mantises, but by and large I like watching it."

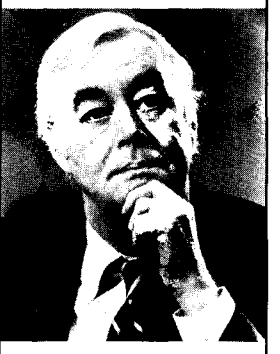
Judy Woodruff, of **The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour**, says, "I watch **Frontline** and **MacNeil/Lehrer**, but not necessarily in that order. And also **Masterpiece Theatre**." But the television in the house she shares with husband Al Hunt of *The Wall Street Journal* is usually tuned to **Mister Rogers' Neighborhood** or **Sesame Street**. Those are the programs her three-year-old son likes to watch.

Irving Krystol



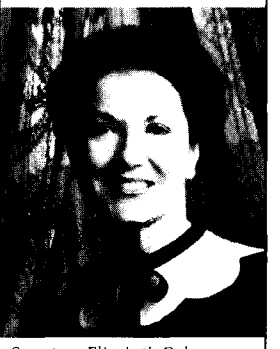
William F. Buckley

Mayor Ed Koch



Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Senator Jay Rockefeller



Secretary Elizabeth Dole

John Updike

Judy Woodruff

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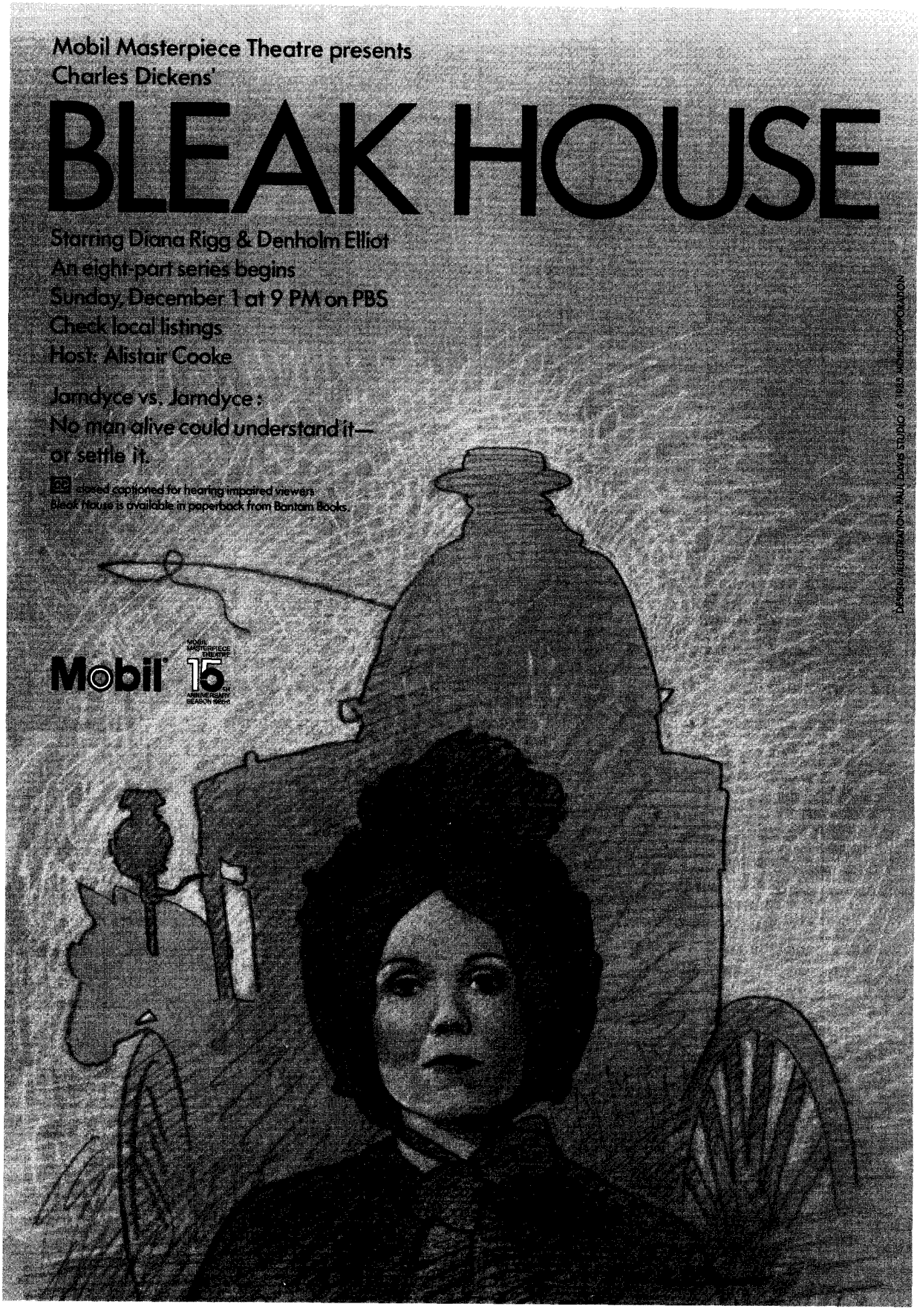
Mobil Masterpiece Theatre presents
Charles Dickens'

BLEAK HOUSE

Starring Diana Rigg & Denholm Elliot
An eight-part series begins
Sunday, December 1 at 9 PM on PBS
Check local listings
Host: Alistair Cooke

Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce:
No man alive could understand it—
or settle it.

CC closed captioned for hearing impaired viewers
Bleak House is available in paperback from Bantam Books.



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MOBIL MASTERPIECE THEATRE 15TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON 1985

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Briefings...

Wonderworks

"KONRAD," a two-part program, October 7 and 14, 8 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

This year **Wonderworks** has a 25-week season that includes stars such as Loretta Swit, David Birney, Carol Burnett, and Carrie Fisher.

Many a parent has wished he or she could put that boisterous little boy in a box, but Konrad starts out there, a factory-made child delivered to the wrong address. The eccentric Mrs. Bartolotti, stunned by the arrival of the crated Konrad, soon settles into motherhood. Ah, but the factory wants him back and thus begins a hilarious campaign, waged by Ned Beatty and Polly Holliday (the smart-talking Southerner Flo from "Alice"), to keep Konrad (played by Huckleberry Fox, the younger son from *Terms of Endearment*). The programs presented on **Wonderworks** have been chosen with children particularly in mind, and are done with such skill that parents will want to watch as well.

Produced by the Children's and Family Consortium (WQED, KCET, KTCA, South Carolina ETV, WETA). Funded by CPB, PTV Stations, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Great Performances

"DR. FISCHER OF GENEVA," October 11, 9 p.m.*
"OLIVIER: A LIFE," October 25 and November 1, 9 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

TV's longest-running performance series launches its 13th season this fall with a wonderful lineup.

Last year Alan Bates was "An Englishman Abroad"; this year he's abroad again as "Dr. Fischer of Geneva," a wealthy eccentric who takes pleasure in finding out exactly how greedy the rich can be. Based on the Graham Greene story, the show features the late James Mason in one of his final roles.

Also on **Great Performances** this season is "Olivier: A Life," a biography of the great actor.

"I am now in my anecdotage," said Laurence Olivier upon being asked what he planned to do with the rest of his life, and indeed he is in this two-part program of the man critic Kenneth Tynan called "the greatest actor alive." More familiar as the darkly romantic Heathcliff or the classic Henry V, the real-life actor is as fascinating as the characters he has played. Olivier, whose marriage to Vivien Leigh collapsed under her legendary alcoholism and infidelities, once said, "I sometimes have thought that my life was as cursed as some of the characters I played, for after every success I've had, something has come along to muck things up."

Produced by The Great Performances Alliance: WNET, KERA, KQED, South Carolina ETV, and WTTW. Funded by The Exxon Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), CPB, and PTV Stations.

Nature

"AND THEN THE RAINS CAME," October 20, 8 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

The critically acclaimed **Nature** series is back this fall for its fourth season. With stunning wildlife photography and informative narration, the natural world is explored in what has become the most watched regular series on public television. This season **Nature** presents 20 new one-hour programs as well as encore presentations from popular shows of past seasons. The series is hosted and narrated by George Page, who is also in charge of production for WNET.

The season's premiere, "And Then the Rains Came," takes a look at how the animals of Kenya's Tsavo plain survive nature's roller coaster of floods and droughts. The show begins with shots of plains barren from drought; then the rains come and thousands of creatures emerge from underground. But the cycle keeps repeating itself, and the earth returns to its dry and barren state.

Presented by WNET. Funded by PTV Stations and the American Gas Association.

Roy Marsden in "Death of an Expert Witness"

PENN & TELLER GO PUBLIC, a half-hour special, October 23, 9 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

A magic show for people who hate magic shows. That's one way to describe this zany new addition to the PBS fall lineup. The "Penn & Teller" show is currently playing to sell-out crowds on off-Broadway. And for a good reason: their magic tricks are not of the usual variety. During the half-hour shows—in front a live audience—you'll see card tricks that are explained, an escape from a straitjacket, and fire-eating, all accompanied by a running commentary from the"bad boys of magic."

Produced by KCET. Funded by PTV Stations.

Mystery!

"DEATH OF AN EXPERT WITNESS," a six-part adaptation of the P. D. James mystery, begins October 24 at 9 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

With shrieks, shadows, shots in the dark, "Death of an Expert Witness" opens the new season of **Mystery!** with a start. Hoggatt's is the setting, a forensic science laboratory in England's flat and misty Fen country, where crimes have a way of being committed as well being solved. One body, then two, then three are offered up. The laboratory's scientists can construct a killer from a single strand of hair, but what can they do when there, crumpled up in a corner of the room, is the body of the expert witness?

James's gentlemanly detective, Adam Dalgliesh (played by Roy Marsden), is what the British press call "a thinking man's copper"—an urbane fellow from Scotland Yard who does his sleuthing in a very civilized manner. He puts things right, of course, but not before poking his way through a pack of suspects and discovering an equal number of guilty secrets involving jealousy, desperation, revenge, blackmail, and secretive love.

Filmed entirely on location in Norfolk and the remote East Anglian fens, "Death of an Expert Witness" is the first P. D. James thriller adapted for television.

And also coming up on **Mystery!**

—"My Cousin Rachel," a remake of the classic Du Maurier tale about a young widow suspected of murdering her husband. Geraldine Chaplin stars as the cursed countess in this four-part presentation beginning December 5.* The cast includes Christopher Guard as Philip, Charles Kay (from "The Woman in White") as Ramaldi, and John Shrapnel as Ambrose Ashley.

—From the harsh beauty of Cornwall, it's back to London and Baker Street for six more episodes of the "Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." Jeremy Brett returns as Holmes and David Burke as Watson in the latest dramatization of Arthur Conan Doyle's puzzlers. Fans can look forward to "The Copper Beeches," "The Greek Interpreter," "The Norwood Builder," "The Resident Patient," "The Red-Headed League," and "The Final Problem," beginning January 2.*

Agatha Christie's Miss Marple toddles into view February 13* with the three-part "The Body in the Library," followed by "The Moving Finger" in two episodes, beginning on March 6*.

On March 20 in "Charters and Caldicott," comfortable old Caldicott—taken up with Club, colonies, and cricket—finds the body of a young woman in his apartment. The two eccentric Englishmen (first seen in Alfred Hitchcock's "The Lady Vanishes") spend the next three episodes finding out who done it.

Mystery! ends its season with five new stories in "Agatha Christie's Partners in Crime," starting May 1.* Set in the Jazz Age of the twenties, the series brings back Francesca Annis and James Warwick as amateur detectives Tuppence and Tommy Beresford.

Presented by WGBH. Funded by Mobil Corp

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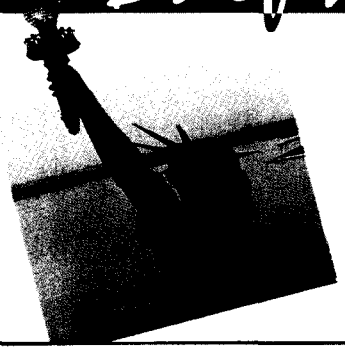
Briefings...



THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, a one-hour special, October 28, 9 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

America's most famous lady reaches her 100th birthday next year, and to celebrate, a one-hour documentary, "The Statue of Liberty," will air on public television. Produced and directed by Ken Burns, whose film on the Brooklyn Bridge was nominated for an Academy Award, it traces the history of the statue and includes interviews with Mario Cuomo, James Baldwin, Ray Charles, Jerzy Kosinski, and poet Caroline Forshe.

Owl/TV

A weekly series of ten half-hour programs, beginning November 3, 5 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

OWL/TV joins **Sesame Street**, **Mister Rogers' Neighborhood**, and **3-2-1 Contact** as part of PBS's programs for kids this fall. In this new series, children learn that the the environment is more than bees, birds, and butterflies. "It might be the bedroom—making costumes out of junk. We need to broaden the word environment," says coproducer Annabel Slaight. "In **OWL**, we have kids making pizza, building a fort. Kids think of their room, their city block as their environment."

But **OWL/TV** doesn't confine itself to the backyard. Most appropriately, they visit the owl lady, a charming champion of screech owls, burrowing owls, great horned owls and, indeed, any owl which has fallen on hard times. As the rescued birds munch their mice, the owl lady pops three abandoned baby owls into a strange nest: "Thank goodness owls can't count. She doesn't know that only three are hers. She thinks all six are."

An imaginative approach to the world around us, **OWL/TV** is being coproduced by Canada's Young Naturalist Foundation and the National Audubon Society, which plans to form Audubon Youth Clubs across the country to give young viewers a chance to become actively involved in nature and science projects. At the same time, the Young Naturalist Foundation will begin publishing its children's magazine, *OWL*, in the United States. "The magazine, while not duplicating the TV show, will tie in with it," says Annabel Slaight, founding editor of the magazine and coproducer of the show.

Produced by The National Audubon Society and the Young Naturalists Foundation. Presented by WNET.

River Journeys

"A RIVER JOURNEY BY CHRISTINA DODWELL," November 6, 8 p.m.*
"THE MEKONG WITH WILLIAM SHAWCROSS," November 13, 8 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

Six writers take six different journeys along some of the world's major waterways in "River Journeys." The program won the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award for best factual series of 1984.

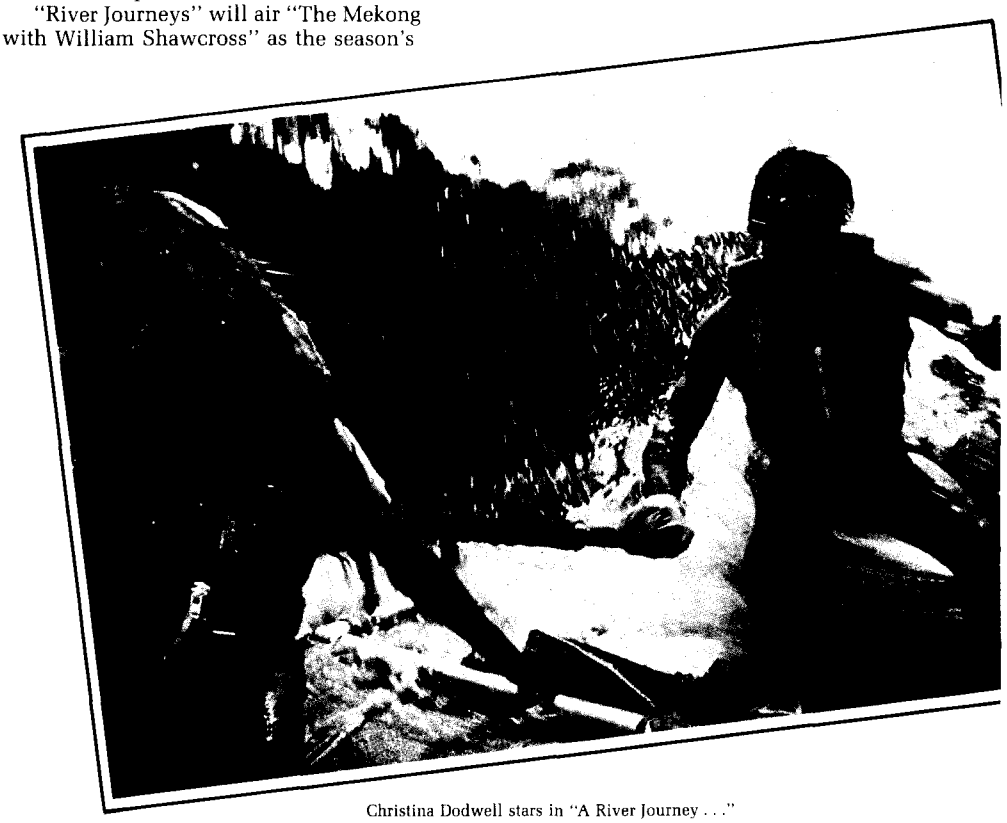
"A River Journey by Christina Dodwell" starts off the series. Dodwell has spent the last ten years exploring the world on horseback and in dugout canoe. She knew about the Waghi River (called the Eater of Men in New Guinea) from an earlier trip and she chose it for her river journey, in company with a team of whitewater rafters.

The banks of the river harbor an exotic world where young boys entering manhood have their skin scored to resemble the scales of a crocodile and where the shriveled bodies of ancestors, smoked over a wood fire until they are as brown and leathery as a tobacco leaf, are hoisted up into baskets to guard the villagers. The native river people are fascinated as they watch the crew pump up the rubber rafts and set off down the deadly river. There are waves that are 20 feet high and black holes where man and raft disappear in a vortex of water. In the end, the river wins. Dodwell, who had never done white-water rafting before, admits to being frightened at first: "Fear can give you a tremendous boost, a surge of adrenalin, but in general it doesn't help at all."

"River Journeys" will air "The Mekong with William Shawcross" as the season's second program. Journalist William Shawcross's journey up the Mekong River, which runs from Tibet through southeast Asia, is as much history lesson as travelogue. The communist officials who arrange his trip announce lyrically that the Mekong is a "river of solidarity." But, says Shawcross, author of *Sideshow* (about American involvement in Cambodia), "The Mekong divides rather than unites the region." Like a pebble skipped across the water, he must hop his way upstream, frequently forced by warring governments to abandon the river and fly on to his next stop. The lives of a peasant people drying rice by the roadside or tethering their goats to the roof of a boat to ferry them to market are viewed against the scenes of recent war—the hulk of a bombed patrol boat juts from the river and Shawcross meets the man who planted the explosive. There is a crippled baby brought out for the cameras, its deformed foot, the communist officials say, the result of defoliants used by the American forces. When Shawcross learns the little boy, who is crying and begging to go home, has been produced seven times for seven film crews, he becomes so upset that he apologizes over and over and finally shouts at the father to take the baby home and keep him there.

Shawcross says that, at first, "traveling in a cocoon of officialdom, I felt as isolated from the Vietnamese as the Americans must have felt—and the French before them." Shawcross, however, is a hard man to isolate. He breaks out time and again to interview the ordinary people of southeast Asia whose lives have so often been disrupted by war.

Presented by WETA. Funded by PTV Stations.



Christina Dodwell stars in "A River Journey . . ."

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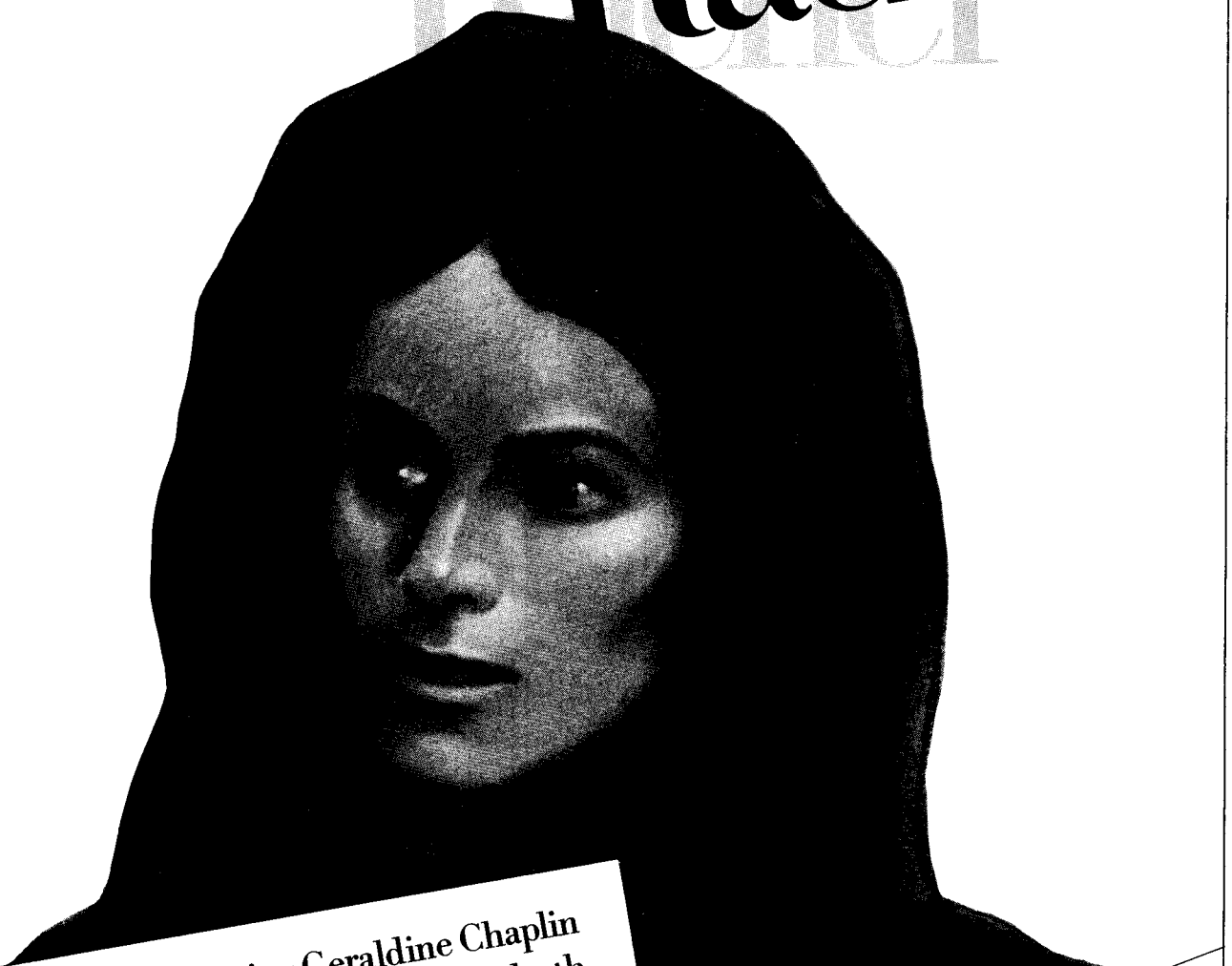
MYSTERY! presents Daphne du Maurier's

My Cousin Rachel



Starring Geraldine Chaplin
To most men she was an angel—of death
A four-part series begins
Thursday, December 5 at 9 PM on PBS
Check local listings
Host: Vincent Price

CC closed captioned for hearing impaired viewers

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MYSTERY! PRESENTS
THE ADVENTURES OF
SHERLOCK HOLMES
SERIES II
So clever they're elementary
Jeremy Brett as Sherlock
David Burke as Watson
A six-part series begins
Thursday, January 2 at 9 PM on PBS
Check local listings
Host: Vincent Price
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Closed captioned for hearing impaired viewers.
The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, published
by Dell books, available in local bookstores.
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Briefings...

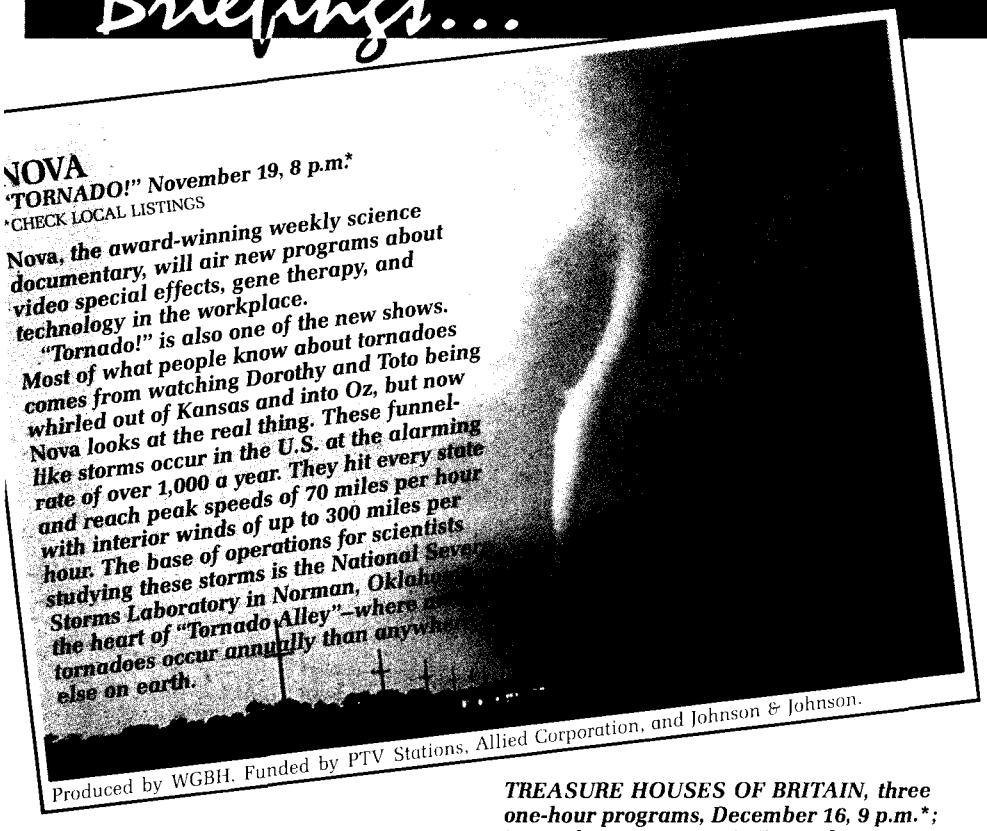
NOVA

"TORNADO!" November 19, 8 p.m.*

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

Nova, the award-winning weekly science documentary, will air new programs about video special effects, gene therapy, and technology in the workplace.

"Tornado!" is also one of the new shows. Most of what people know about tornadoes comes from watching Dorothy and Toto being whirled out of Kansas and into Oz, but now Nova looks at the real thing. These funnel-like storms occur in the U.S. at the alarming rate of over 1,000 a year. They hit every state and reach peak speeds of 70 miles per hour with interior winds of up to 300 miles per hour. The base of operations for scientists studying these storms is the National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Oklahoma, the heart of "Tornado Alley"—where more tornadoes occur annually than anywhere else on earth.



Produced by WGBH. Funded by PTV Stations, Allied Corporation, and Johnson & Johnson.

SMART TALK ON PBS

And for those caught up with the talk-show biz, there are the following:

The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour, airing weekdays, is now in its third season covering major news stories with a blend of interviews and discussions, documentary reports and special features.

Washington Week in Review wraps it all up at the end of the week, Fridays at 8 p.m.* Paul Duke and a panel of journalists discuss the issues that dominate the front pages.

In **Wall $treet Week** Louis Rukeyser, the only man on TV with his own elves, takes stock of the stocks after taking stock of the news. On Fridays, 8:30 p.m.*

Each week on **Firing Line** that inimitable conservative William Buckley puts a guest to a battle over current events.

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

*CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE, a special 90-minute program, November 20, 9 p.m.**

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

"Every single atom in your body was once within a star"—host Timothy Ferris quotes an astronomer in "The Creation of the Universe," a program that can put a bad day at the office in perspective, reaching back, as it does, 15 billion years to the Big Bang. With five Nobel Laureates on its advisory panel and only one mathematical formula in 90 minutes, "Creation" not only makes quarks, neutrons, and protons as familiar as E.T., but also follows physicists in their search for a Unified Field Theory. This universal formula would account, says Ferris, "for every fundamental process in nature, from the jostling of atoms to the wheeling of the galaxy." Brian Eno wrote the music that accompanies Ferris as he makes his way back through time searching for the secret of the universe.

Produced by Northstar Associates. Funded by Texas Instruments.

*COMET HALLEY, a one-hour special, November 26, 9 p.m.**

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

In 1705 Edmond Halley predicted that the comet later named for him would reappear in 1758. By calculating the orbit of the comet, he moved those bright and mysterious balls from the area of folklore into science. "Comet Halley" will reappear in 1986 and is the subject of a one-hour documentary. The executive producer, John Wilhelm, is a former science correspondent for *Time* and a former senior editor of *Science 80*.

Produced by John L. Wilhelm, WETA, and Japan's Asahi Broadcasting Corp. Funded by M&M/Mars Inc., the CPB, Asahi Broadcasting Corp., and the Planetary Society.

TREASURE HOUSES OF BRITAIN, three one-hour programs, December 16, 9 p.m.; December 23, 10 p.m.*; December 30, 9 p.m.**

*CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS

When you look out on your lawn and sigh at the sight of all those leaves waiting to be raked, think of the poor Duke of Buccleuch with three houses and 300,000 acres, all in need of tending. There are, of course, compensations to being the master of Drumlanrig Castle and Bowhill in Scotland and Boughton House in England: the only privately owned Leonardo da Vinci dwells there, for instance, and 45 Van Dyke miniature portraits hang in a single room. The fine art and fine furniture is so impressive that, according to Nancy Mitford, the curator of the Louvre once apologized to the late Duke that the Louvre's French furniture was not as good as the Buccleuchs'. With the National Gallery of Art opening "The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting" on November 3, and Prince Charles and Princess Diana arriving on November 8, PBS checks in with "Treasure Houses of Britain," three one-hour programs strolling through the stately homes from Tudor times to the Victorian era, when newly rich industrialists settled themselves into ersatz castles. The beautiful objects are coupled with good gossip, as when the program explores the caves at West Wycombe where Sir Francis Dashwood and his fellow members of The Hell Fire Club got up to some very naughty things indeed.

Presented by WETA. Funded in part by the Ford Motor Company.

One of the treasure houses of Britain

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LORD MOUNTBATTEN
THE LAST VICEROY

Illustration: Teresa Fasolino Design: Chermayeff & Geismar Associates

Some called it betrayal– Others, his finest hour

A six-part series starring Nicol Williamson Janet Suzman

Begins Sunday 9PM January 26 on PBS Check local listings Host: Alistair Cooke

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Lord Mountbatten: The Last Viceroy, published by Pocket Books, is available in local bookstores

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by his use of the word "deceit," which I find translated as "subtilty" in my copy of the Bible.

The Esau-Jacob story is really one of the most harrowing episodes in the Bible for me. In my youth, I thought it was an unacceptable example of God's unfairness because Esau's fate defied the concept of free will with which man was supposedly endowed. Even worse than God's answer to Rebekah's question, "Why am I thus?," was that of Rashi, who said that the reason for the struggle "within her" was that when Rebekah passed a temple of the infidel, Esau struggled to emerge and when she passed a synagogue, Jacob struggled to emerge. *In utero*, then, one fetus had already been sanctified, the other stigmatized. Why, then, did the Lord go to all the trouble of making Esau the firstborn? In fact, why did God wish upon his parents this loathsome creature whom, according to Malachi (1:2-4) and Romans (9:11-13) repeating Malachi, the Lord hated ("And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste").

I always thought the Esau-Jacob story, with Jacob grabbing Esau's heel during childbirth, was an inexplicable manifestration of celestial injustice. Why should a just and merciful God hate an unborn child? The Esau-Jacob story documents the indefensible doctrine of infant damnation. And what shall we say about Elisha—he who in the name of the Lord cursed the little children who mocked him and his bald head? And so "there came forth two she-bears out of the wood and tare forty and two children of them."

The Midrash tells the story that when Pharaoh ordered the Jewish children to be walled in alive in the pyramids, the Angel Michael seized one of them and held him up to the heavenly court. When God saw the frightened child, He was moved to such compassion that He decided then and there to end the exile. So we have another question, one raised by Elie Wiesel: "One Jewish child succeeded in moving God, but one million Jewish children did not. I try to understand and I cannot." Who can? And who can understand the condemnation of the unborn Esau who, when he met Jacob twenty years later, generously forgave his brother?

ARNOLD BEICHMAN
Naramata, British Columbia

ROBERT ALTER writes:

My thanks to Arnold Beichman for calling attention to two errors of chapter reference that crept into my text. The initial occurrences of the phrase "took the blessing" are both in Genesis 27, verses 35 and 36, and not, as I had it, in Chapters 32 and 37. As for "subtilty" instead of "deceit" for the Hebrew *mirmah*, the King James Version uses the former in its older sense of "craftiness, especially of a treacherous kind" (OED), so there is no real difference between my translation and the KJV.

Questions about the dooming of innocent children are of course unanswerable. I would only observe that the notion that Esau was "hated" by God from the womb is less an element of the original story than the consequence of later archetypal readings. That process, building on the eponymous character of the two brothers, was obviously well under way by the time of Malachi. In the rabbinical period, Esau's fate was sealed as Esau-Edom became the symbol of Rome, the archetype of pagan iniquity and brutal oppression. Rashi, writing in the 11th century, reads Genesis through the optic of that archetypical tradition, but the original story offers a more multifaceted portrait of Esau and leaves God's moral judgment of the older twin in the realm of uncertain inference. Esau is clearly destined to lose the birthright, but we are left to wonder at times about the moral status of the brother who wrests the birthright for himself.

Soviet-Jewish Emigration

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his review of Martin Gilbert's *The Jews of Hope* [Books in Review, June], Arch Puddington analyzes Soviet restrictions on Jewish emigration. He says that "Moscow has blamed the Jackson-Vanik amendment . . . [but] this is clearly not true, since emigration reached unprecedented levels *after* the amendment was enacted." Clearly, the amendment has not proved to be an immovable obstacle to increased emigration. Still, it has been an obstacle. The number of Jews permitted to leave plummeted immediately after the amendment was approved. Henry Kissinger, who negotiated closely with Senator Henry Jackson and Andrei Gromyko on this issue, has argued persuasively that the amendment did nothing but harm (see *Years of Upheaval*).

More recently, Kissinger's thesis has received support from Arkady Shevchenko, the former Soviet diplomat. In *Breaking With Moscow* (pp. 260-61) he writes:

> During the early 70's, a period of energetic effort to improve East-West relations, Moscow showed a certain sensitivity to Western public opinion and governmental pressure in behalf of Jewish emigration. The first period of outward flow ended in 1974, when the U.S. Congress approved the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments to American trade legislation, conditioning certain benefits for the Soviet Union on the number of Jews allowed to emigrate. Moscow was determined to show that its policy was not being shaped by such overt outside influence, and it cut back the level of emigration. In 1977, it increased as part of a drive to show compliance with the least offensive human-rights aspects of the Helsinki Accords. . . .

Thus, emigration was cut *because* of the amendment, and was later increased only *in spite* of the amendment.

This lesson should be vividly impressed on those who seek similar measures on behalf of foreign minorities. The obvious example is South Africa. Those who want an end to "constructive engagement" should read Kissinger's account. It gives a good idea of what is and is not possible in persuading a stubborn, suspicious, tough-minded country to change its domestic policies. Demonstrations and Jackson's highly publicized efforts were of substantial aid to Kissinger in his negotiations with Gromyko. He could say, in effect, "Look, if you don't let more Jews out these pressures will increase, and our relations will suffer." But there was a point at which pressure became counterproductive, i.e., when Congress tried openly, publicly, blatantly to gain economic leverage over Soviet emigration. In other words, the Jackson-Vanik amendment had negotiating value *as something to be avoided*. But as soon as it became a reality, Moscow had "to show that its policy was not being shaped by such overt outside pressure, and it cut back the level of emigration." . . .

JACK NOBLE
Los Angeles, California

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ARCH PUDDINGTON writes:

Jack Noble is probably correct in asserting that the Soviet Union reduced Jewish emigration in the immediate wake of the adoption of the Jackson-Vanik amendment. That fact does not, however, lead to the conclusion that the subsequent increase in Jewish emigration was granted simply "to show compliance with the least offensive human-rights aspects of the Helsinki Accords." Clearly, the fact that the United States would, through legislation, attach conditions on trade predicated on Jewish emigration sent an unmistakable message to the Kremlin. While it is true that the threat of sanctions is at times more effective than the actual imposition of sanctions, it is also true, especially in dealing with the Soviets, that continued threats lose their effectiveness unless they are reinforced by concrete action. The lesson of Jackson-Vanik is not that sanctions do not work, but rather that the Soviets will eventually accommodate themselves to otherwise distasteful conditions when confronted by a determined and consistent U.S. stance.

Foreign Aid

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his provocative article, "The Perversion of Foreign Aid" [June], Nick Eberstadt tends to place the blame for the perceived failure of foreign aid on changing policies of the U.S. government. It may be argued, however, that the modifications that have occurred over a twenty-five-year period were a response to changing conditions, over time, in recipient (as well as donor) countries and reflect experience with ongoing programs. . . .

Foreign aid and direct investment, which had contributed to the diversification of the economies of the developing countries, were displaced during the oil crisis in the early 1970's when recycled petrodollars were offered by the international banking system for a variety of projects—public and private—with minimal review of their viability. Concurrently, foreign aid, bilateral and multilateral, was channeled to the poorest segment of the population, which was not directly affected by flows of external finance. Given these circumstances, it is no surprise that the "basic-human-needs" approach helped to solve emergency problems, but did not pretend to affect underlying structure.

Looking back over twenty-five years in, say, Latin America, we can see that economic development has been quite successful in terms of the overall building of infrastructure, productive capacity, and trade and growth of GNP, although the internal distribution of the increased income has not been even. The debt crisis which surfaced in 1982-83 has inflicted severe setbacks, reducing per-capita GNP to levels of five years earlier. Imports were severely restricted to save foreign exchange with which to pay for service on the foreign debt. Against this backdrop, . . . conventional foreign financial aid . . . can, at best, only alleviate critical situations.

A major dilemma in foreign aid is the constraint on donors' direct policy involvement in recipient countries, yet in many cases assistance is most urgently required in establishing priorities and in formulating appropriate incentive policies to achieve the desired ends. In the absence of stable and consistent policies in recipient countries, foreign-aid efforts will tend to be fragmentary and localized and will often be swept away by the tide of changing political fortunes. . . . Projects tend to follow traditional lines and often deal with subjects which should by now have been mastered by the recipients. Yet the continuity of personnel and institutions is frequently missing, and successive governments tend to repeat requests for aid previously rendered.

In sum, the process of giving, receiving, and filtering aid through the society is perhaps as relevant as the actual content of the aid package. . . . One should perhaps search for ways to integrate foreign aid into the fabric of a culturally different society rather than experimenting with slogans and approaches to selected segments of the population. As noted by Mr. Eberstadt, "development is primarily the responsibility of the people of the less developed countries . . .," but that does not preclude foreign aid from providing assistance with regard to the nature and direction of this development.

MARCO D. POLLNER
Bethesda, Maryland

NICK EBERSTADT writes:

If I read Marco D. Pollner's letter correctly, we are in agreement that foreign aid can, under the

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proper circumstances, contribute to material advance and self-sustaining growth in recipient nations. Our disagreements seem to center upon the identification of these proper circumstances.

Mr. Pollner suggests that the financial aid extended by developed countries and multilateral institutions in response to the "debt crisis" of the early 1980's was an appropriate (albeit insufficient) action. If his conclusion is correct, this is not owing to the strength of the analysis upon which it is based. The so-called "debt crisis" besetting so many nations in recent years was neither an unpredictable nor an unavoidable event. Nor was it principally a result of forces beyond the control of the governments affected by it. What has been labeled a "debt crisis" was in fact a reflection of a somewhat different, but rather straightforward, problem: namely, that the rates of return on the foreign funds many governments borrowed were significantly lower than the rates of interest which they were obliged to pay back on these loans. It would seem to me that such a situation might usefully prompt one to consider the uses to which borrowed funds were put in the newly insolvent nations. I do not see how the inability or unwillingness of certain governments to make good on contracted financial obligations can serve as the base of an argument for increasing the volume or deepening the concessionality of the foreign capital transfers to them.

The "basic-human-needs" programs promoted and underwritten by various foreign-aid agencies can, as Mr. Pollner indicates, be explained in terms of historical factors. But surely he does not believe that every event which can be explained should also be endorsed.

Mr. Pollner avows that the poorest segments of Latin America's population have been unaffected by "flows of external finance"—an opinion which, while highly questionable, nevertheless continues to maintain a certain currency among some students of contemporary Latin American affairs. Mr. Pollner also indicates that he is interested in the impact of government policies on the prospects for economic advancement of the populations over which those governments preside. Given these two views, I would have expected him to argue for systematic reforms of social and economic policies in Latin American nations, although I did not read an advocacy of such reforms in his letter.

Finally, Mr. Pollner wishes that governments receiving foreign aid would have "stable and consistent" policies. It seems to me very much more important that their policies be economically rational, socially sensible, and politically enlightened. Many of the governments in the modern world whose policies are the most "stable and consistent" embrace agendas which are neither sensible, enlightened, nor particularly economically rational.

Kirov, Cont'd.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Henrik Bering-Jensen's thesis that there is a real doubt about Stalin's responsibility for the Kirov murder cannot be allowed to stand [Letters from Readers, July]. He rightly notes that Adam Ulam disputes it, but his is the only important voice to do so. It is not merely a question of myself and Roy Medvedev, but of Boris Souvarine and Bertram Wolfe, Anton Antonov-Ovseenko and Leonid Petrovski, and so on. And Ulam, in this context, argues far below his usual level, with such points as that reproduced by Mr. Bering-Jensen—that Stalin "would have" avoided procuring assassination for fear of giving someone the idea of assassinating *him* (which could otherwise, presumably, never have occurred to anybody). On this argument no politician seeking to preserve or secure power would ever organize an assassination: therefore none such has ever occurred throughout history!

Medvedev and I do not in fact "advance theories." We merely point out that the established and accepted facts (about which there is more to be said than I can develop here) are incompatible with any explanation other than that Stalin gave the NKVD its orders to assist the assassin. As Stephen F. Cohen writes in his *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*: "That Stalin plotted the murder through his police agents is no longer seriously in doubt." Only unseriously.

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Is There Now, or Has There Ever Been, Such a Thing as Totalitarianism?

Walter Laqueur

NO IDEA in our time has provoked more impassioned debate than the idea of totalitarianism. Used indiscriminately by some as a synonym for fascism, or Communism, or both, it is abhorred and denounced by others as a source of deliberate confusion and a propaganda weapon. The debate has concerned not only the past and present political character of the Soviet Union but also, in retrospect, the political character of Nazi Germany. Unlike some other current controversies, the debate over totalitarianism has not been a purely academic enterprise. In part it is about words, categories, and definitions; above all, however, it concerns political realities, and it is therefore of considerable practical importance. As is clear from the uproar over Jeane Kirkpatrick's introduction of the concept into the discussion of Central America, behind seemingly semantic hair-splitting are some of the key issues facing U.S. foreign policy—in particular, how to conduct relations with the Soviet bloc and the Third World.

I

ALTHOUGH it is widely believed that totalitarianism as a concept was invented in the 40's and 50's by Western cold warriors trying to prove there was nothing to choose between Hitler and Stalin, in actual fact the term goes back to the early 1920's when it was first used by Italian anti-fascists and later picked up with some gusto by Mussolini, who wrote a famous article on the subject. (While the Italians "invented" totalitarianism as a theoretical concept, however, their practical contribution to the form was quite modest; of all the great dictatorships of our time, Italian fascism was the least totalitarian.) The concept was then taken up and elaborated by social scientists, mostly émigrés from Nazi Germany. It was also used on many occasions by left-wing writers like Victor Serge, and by Marxists like Trotsky, Otto Bauer, and Rudolf Hilferding.

All these writers claimed—correctly, in my judgment—that while dictatorships and tyrannies were as old as the hills, there was a qualitative difference between all previous despotisms and the dictatorships which emerged after World War I. To put the difference negatively, old-fashioned, traditional dictatorships had not used propaganda and other means of social control (including terror) to anything like the same extent as did the modern ones. They had not tried to mobilize the masses. Ideology played a far lesser role in their self-conception. There was no monopolistic state-party. And while, in a "traditional" dictatorship, the legal order was always affected to some degree, it was never disregarded as completely as it was in a totalitarian regime.

Finally, if one wished to be crude about it, one could argue that any regime attracting 99 percent of the votes in an election was by definition totalitarian. For an old-fashioned dictatorship would not have been able to induce virtually everyone to vote, or to bring about a result like this by either fraud or pressure; for that matter, it would not have felt the need in the first place to gain such pseudo-legitimacy. This definition of totalitarianism may be regarded as simplistic, but it was probably as good as, if not better than, the more complicated ones developed in more recent decades.

Two works which appeared soon after World War II helped to popularize the idea of totalitarianism: Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and, more influential in the academic community, Carl Friedrich's and Zbigniew Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1957). Both drew attention to the correspondence between Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, Arendt stating that they were two "essentially identical" systems, Friedrich and Brzezinski that they were "basically alike."

But both also put forward theses which were not borne out by later events: in particular, that totalitarianism is an end in itself, that a totali-

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tarian system is bound to become more totalitarian all the time, and that an omnipotent leader is a precondition for totalitarian rule. When Stalin died, and changes took place in the Soviet Union culminating in the famous attacks at the 20th party congress of the CPSU on the "cult of personality," Arendt quickly retreated from some of these positions. Friedrich and Brzezinski also modified their view, conceding ten years after the first edition of their book that Hitler and Stalin represented not the norm but extreme instances of totalitarianism, and that too much significance had been attributed to certain personal (and therefore transient) features of their regimes which were not necessarily intrinsic elements of totalitarian rule.

It was in part because of flaws like these that some dismissed the totalitarian concept altogether, or at least grew reluctant to use it in describing the regime in the Soviet Union. But only in part; there were reasons of a political or ideological nature behind this reluctance as well. Thus, according to one school of thought, the concept wrongly concentrated on techniques common to Nazi and Communist rule—propaganda, terror, the one-party system—while missing the essence of the regimes as revealed in their professed aims. How could one compare the goals of Marxism-Leninism, such as freedom and social justice, with those of fascism and Nazism? Besides, one could point to certain social and economic achievements of the Soviet regime; if actual performance fell woefully short of the claims that had been made for that society, these might be just temporary distortions bound to disappear in the course of time. Fascism, by contrast, was intrinsically evil, immune to change for the better either through evolution or through reform. In this reading, then, totalitarianism, if useful at all in understanding dictatorial regimes, might be applied to Nazism but not to Communism.

In the 1960's the totalitarianism concept as applied to Communism fell into further disrepute. In the Soviet Union Stalinism had been replaced by something more difficult to analyze and define, the mass purges had ceased, and the population of the Gulag greatly decreased. In addition, the worldwide Communist monolith was splitting apart. These and other developments seemed to show that Communist totalitarianism as described by Arendt and Friedrich-Brzezinski had either passed from this world, or had perhaps never existed. And so burial rites were held. One critic wrote that the so-called totalitarian state had been neither total nor a state. The author of the entry "Totalitarianism" in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* predicted that just as there had been no such article in the first edition, there would be none in the third.

But if the concept of totalitarianism was buried, Communist regimes continued to exist. How to define them? According to the new consensus, the Soviet and other Communist systems were authoritarian.

Unfortunately, "authoritarian" is one of those terms that can mean a great many different things. A political regime completely devoid of authority is unthinkable, at least for any length of time. Every dictatorship or semi-dictatorship is *a priori* authoritarian, be it a monarchy (Saudi Arabia, Jordan under Hussein, Morocco under Hassan) or such disparate regimes as Pakistan, Vietnam, and Indonesia, not to mention all African and most Latin American countries. Even the German government under Adenauer, France under de Gaulle, Israel under Ben-Gurion were to some extent authoritarian. Of what use is a category which can be applied to nine-tenths if not more of the member states of the United Nations? If we say that the Soviet Union or Bulgaria is "authoritarian," what new light have we shed on their specific character? And if the totalitarianism concept is to be dismissed as inapplicable in view of the differences between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, what is the point of replacing it with a label covering political systems which have nothing in common whatsoever?

Aware of this dilemma, scholars over the years have introduced new terms to define Communist regimes, ranging from the obvious but unhelpful to the irrelevant or even ludicrous: neo-feudalism; welfare-state authoritarianism; failed totalitarianism; institutional pluralism; limited pluralism. Others have relied on the concept of modernization, but this too has been of little assistance, for the term totalitarianism refers to the structure of power in a society whereas modernization involves an altogether different set of social processes. Yet another approach—the study of Western management and of the way Western corporations are run—proved similarly unenlightening when it came to understanding the specific character of Communist societies; ditto with bureaucracy and interest groups.

By the early 1980's even the more enthusiastic advocates of the various "pluralist" models of Communist society had to admit that the announcement of the demise of their rival concept had been premature. Stephen F. Cohen of Princeton, one of the chief of these revisionists, has observed with regret in his new book, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*,* that the main impact of his school of thought was felt in the middle 1970's, and that it did not succeed in putting an end to the totalitarianism thesis.

The reason, actually, is quite simple, and has to do with political reality. The revisionists would have easily carried the day if de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union had brought about a radical and complete break with the past; if détente had pre-

* Oxford University Press, 222 pp., $17.95.

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vailed in international relations; if there had been unmistakable signs of the emergence of democratic institutions—or at least of true pluralism—inside the Soviet Union. In the face of such incontrovertible evidence, even the staunchest believers in the concept of totalitarianism would have been unable to keep it alive much longer. But facts, as Lenin liked to say, are stubborn things, and the facts dictated otherwise: de-Stalinization, after a promising start, was halted and later even reversed; Soviet political institutions did not fundamentally change; the regime was still an absolute dictatorship.

In short, if no one today denies that in its early form the totalitarianism model was inadequate and in part misleading, the attempt to replace it with something radically new has failed. I suspect that even the most committed revisionists know this, though they are reluctant to admit it in public.

II

WHERE then does all this leave us? If the same term cannot be used for the Soviet Union in the late Stalin era and under Gorbachev, for China under Mao and under its present rulers, for Poland and Hungary in the 1950's and today, is there perhaps a whole spectrum of totalitarianisms?

Leading students of totalitarianism have devoted much thought to this question but there is no unanimity among them. The German scholar Karl Dietrich Bracher, who perhaps has contributed more than anyone else to our understanding of the rise of the Nazi movement and Hitler's takeover, sees no reason to discontinue using the term both for Nazism and for Communism. His four criteria are: an official and exclusive ideology; a centralized and hierarchically organized mass movement; control of mass communications for the purpose of indoctrination; and control of the economy and social relations.*

Even more important are two basic points which Bracher has emphasized time and again, and which have caused much offense. Totalitarianism, he says, is not a typical and exclusive product of the interwar period that came to an end in 1945; on the contrary, recent technologies offer modern dictatorships even greater possibilities for the mobilization and indoctrination of the masses and the imposition of strict controls over society. Second, the fundamental dividing line in recent history is not between Left and Right, and not between capitalism and socialism (despite all the differences between them), but between dictatorship and democracy, despotism and freedom.

A great deal of blindness is needed to doubt or deny the opposition of democracy and dictatorship—yet it has scandalized some for whom the main ideological issue of our time is not political freedom but economic organization. For them, a dictatorship may still be progressive whereas a democracy, so long as it is capitalist, is still prefascist or "potentially fascist." And since all democracies which have ever existed (except perhaps in Iceland or early modern Switzerland) have been either capitalist or based on a mixed economy, they are all regarded as suspect. Bracher's scheme neatly exposes the political bias behind such a contention.

Bracher also sees a dividing line between totalitarianism and authoritarianism, as does Juan Linz, a leading Yale political sociologist. Linz draws the distinction around three main points. An authoritarian regime can tolerate limited political pluralism, whereas totalitarian rule cannot. In an authoritarian regime ideology is not a central issue; a general perspective usually suffices. Nor does an authoritarian regime need mass political participation directed from above.

This seems to be about the best available key to an understanding of the differences between the two systems. It is not a magic wand for, as Linz has pointed out, there always will be a degree of uncertainty, a gray zone, with regard to the specific character of authoritarian regimes and the direction they are likely to take in future. Yet the soundness of Linz's approach has been borne out by, for instance, events in Spain during the last decade. Franco's rule was not totalitarian, despite what many claimed at the time; there was no central ideology and no political mass party, only an old-fashioned if altogether unattractive military dictatorship. For this reason, after Franco's death the transition to a democratic regime proceeded without great difficulty. By contrast, no totalitarian regime has ever transformed itself peacefully in a democratic direction: this has happened only following total military defeat.

BRACHER and Linz were influenced in their work on the totalitarian state above all by the fascist experience. In the thought of the German political philosopher Richard Lowenthal, it is the impact of developments in the Communist world that is central. Like Bracher and Linz, Lowenthal similarly accepts the line between tyranny and freedom, but he believes that the Soviet Union and other Communist regimes have definitively moved beyond totalitarianism, toward a stage he calls "post-totalitarian authoritarianism" or "authoritarian bureaucratic

* These bear comparison with the basic features of totalitarian dictatorship listed by Carl Friedrich in the 1950's: an ideology; a single party typically led by one man; a terroristic police; a communications monopoly; a weapons monopoly; and a centrally directed economy. This scheme was criticized, not without justice, for a variety of reasons: the economy under Nazism and fascism was never under full state control; history seems to show that while fascism needs a single leader, Communism can also do with a collective leadership headed by a *primus inter pares*; etc. Bracher's list is shorter and simpler.

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oligarchy." There may still be a clearly recognizable leader, but his powers are not markedly greater than those of a Western prime minister over the members of his cabinet. The people still have no means to remove the leadership, but the revolution from above (the most prominent feature of totalitarianism, according to Lowenthal) has run out of steam.

Lowenthal does not argue that the new equilibrium in an erstwhile totalitarian regime offers the prospect of some kind of gradual liberalization; radical opposition to the values and institutions of Western democracy will continue. But in the Communist countries he expects a stabilizing of the post-revolutionary institutions of one-party rule, rather than a revival of totalitarianism *per se*: "Those countries have not gone from tyranny to freedom, but from massive terror to a rule of meanness, ensuring stability at the risk of stagnation."*

Lowenthal's (relative) optimism has been criticized by experts on the Soviet Union and China who have noted that while there have been thaws in both countries, the totalitarian iceberg has not melted.† Besides, can it really be taken for granted that the experience of Stalin and Mao has immunized these regimes forever against the grosser forms of despotism? Or could it be, as some believe, that they are fated for a long time to come to alternate between cycles of relative relaxation and strong oppression, with the single-party dictatorship and the old structures and institutions remaining intact?

Like Lowenthal, Pierre Hassner, the author of a recent masterly review of the subject,** recognizes that far-reaching changes have taken place in the Soviet bloc, but they have not in his view gone beyond the point of no return. The new regime is not authoritarian in the traditional sense, but rather represents a form of totalitarianism in decline. Seen in this perspective, "post-totalitarian authoritarianism" is only a totalitarianism which has lost some of its dynamism, and its capacity to control a society which has become more complex and/or more resistant. In the Soviet Union such a development has resulted in fewer purges and less mass terror and perhaps a greater degree of *Realpolitik* in foreign affairs—though in this last respect the difference with Stalinism is not that great. But it has not resulted in a significantly more liberal regime, and not even in a massive strengthening of interest groups—unless one regards the interpenetration of party, KGB, army, and the commanding positions in the economy as a form of pluralism.

Nor, as Hassner sees it, has there been any fundamental change in Soviet foreign policy. The question of whether the Soviet leaders truly believe in world revolution is irrelevant; perhaps they never did. But:

> In the absence of traditional or democratic legitimation, the regime keeps the country in a state of permanent insecurity. In order to maintain their power, the leaders must keep control over their empire and society. In order to achieve this they have to be armed against all outside influences, which means the need for an ideology involving hostility vis-à-vis the outside world, and power which makes it possible to defeat, potentially at least, every outside threat. And these defensive and conservative considerations may push them toward expansion and conflict as surely as any crusading messianism.

If one were to summarize the debate at this stage, then, it seems undeniable that the totalitarianism concept in its original form is in need of modification. But the attempt to substitute the authoritarian label has proved altogether misleading, and the other terms suggested are no better. Among those other terms I myself would include Hassner's own "totalitarianism in decline" and still another that has been suggested, "failed totalitariansm" (Michael Walzer). In fact, it could be argued that if there has been a certain relaxation of domestic pressure in the Eastern bloc, this is a consequence of the triumph rather than the failure of totalitarianism; the opposition has been crushed, large parts of the population have been successfully indoctrinated, and in these circumstances there is no need for more drastic measures such as mass purges and executions. Still less is it clear why the Soviet Union and China should be regarded as failures.

If one wishes to stick to the totalitarian label (which I would favor for want of a better term), it ought to be stressed that present-day totalitarianism is mature, advanced, perhaps even rational, in contrast to the frenzied or sultanistic (Max Weber) totalitarianism of an earlier period—paranoiac in Stalin's case, hyperaggressive in Hitler's. Those who prefer another term are obliged to point out that they are referring by it not to old-style autocratic regimes like absolute monarchies or military dictatorships, but to a modern-type dictatorship, based on a full-control system run by the leadership of a political party using high-technology means of repression and indoctrination. They are referring, in other words, to totalitarianism.

III

As THE totalitarianism debate among students of the Soviet Union and Communist affairs has more or less come full circle in the last thirty years, so a somewhat similar course has been run with regard to National

* "Beyond Totalitarianism," in *1984 Revisited*, edited by Irving Howe (Harper & Row, 1984).

† See, for example, A. Schifrin in *Totalitarian Democracy and After*, International Colloquium in Honor of Y. Talmon (Jerusalem, 1984).

** "*Le totalitarianisme vu de l'Ouest*," in *Totalitarianismes*, edited by Guy Hermet (Paris, 1984).

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Socialism. That debate began in the 1960's, when a number of historians and political scientists, mainly German, whose anti-Nazi credentials were above suspicion, began to claim that the earlier interpretations of Nazism had been mistaken.*

Nazi policy, these scholars asserted, far from being monolithic and centralized, was frequently incoherent. Nor was it true that all power was concentrated in Hitler's hands; the old social structures continued to exist and to be active under the surface. Nazi ideology, too, was less important than had commonly been thought; policy evolved as the result of an interaction between doctrine (ideology) and improvisation, the latter being triggered by all kinds of objective pressures and factors over which the Nazis had little or no control.

In short, if according to adherents of the totalitarianism model (as in Nazi mythology itself) everything in the country was done in a purposeful way, the machine ran smoothly, Hitler's power was unlimited, and there were no serious conflicts among the Nazi leaders, according to the revised view Nazi Germany was ruled in a casual way, the machine ran anything but smoothly, Hitler's power was quite limited, and underlings maintained their private empires virtually up to the very end. Some revisionists went so far as to describe the political structure of the Third Reich as "polycratic chaos"; others used less extreme formulations. But the general trend of the critique was unmistakable: like Stalin, Hitler had been a mere "authoritarian."

Even the history of the Holocaust came in for radical reinterpretation. It was not denied that millions of Jews were actually killed, but it was argued that there was no straight line leading from Nazi ideology to the Holocaust (the so-called "linear thesis"), that there was no coordination and planned Nazi policy toward the Jews, and that the mass murder was not an aim that Hitler had set *a priori*. Rather, the Holocaust was a *Flucht nach vorn*, an endeavor to find a way out of a blind alley into which the Nazi leaders had maneuvered themselves. These leaders did not so much plan the Final Solution as more or less stumble into it: because many Jews had already been taken away, the others also had to be deported; since there was no place to resettle them, they had to be exterminated. And so one thing led to another, in considerable part by mere accident, and there was a cumulative radicalization of policy during the war which Hitler had neither foreseen nor planned.

The controversy between "intentionalists" (those stressing the impact of Nazi ideology on Nazi policies) and "functionalists" (or revisionists) has been part of a larger debate over the character of Nazi rule, and it is by no means over. Some of the points made by the revisionists are irrefutable, although they concern allegations never advanced by serious scholars. Thus, as the revisionists say, it is indeed physically impossible for one man, even the most efficient and hard-working leader, to control every aspect of life in a big country. No more than decisions concerning the organization of schools in Uzbekistan were made by Stalin personally did Hitler, who had no interest in economics in the first place, set the norms of production for the Upper Silesian coal industry. Although Nazi mythology, like Communist mythology, described the leader as omnipresent and omniscient, that was even less true in Germany than in the Soviet Union, if only because Hitler had only six years from the seizure of power to the outbreak of war to establish his control mechanisms, not enough time for a major endeavor of this kind. Once war broke out, everything was subordinated to the military effort, and tinkering with political and social institutions was discouraged.

Nevertheless, it is crucial for the understanding of totalitarian regimes to recognize that while not all decisions are actually made in and by the center, *no* truly important decision is made without the knowledge, let alone against the wish, of the leader. It is equally important to realize that while not all decisions are made by the supreme leader, all *could* in principle have been made by him.

Private empires and divergent interests existed in the Third Reich; people quarrel and try to expand their power wherever they work together. But without the good will of the leader, satraps lose their power base from one day to the next. Recent purges and reshuffles in the Kremlin show that nothing has changed in this respect. There is no justification for calling a society pluralistic simply because some of its leaders may disagree—or even try to kill each other.

"FUNCTIONALIST" historians claim that "intentionalists" have taken at face value Hitler's speeches, Nazi editorials, and *Mein Kampf*. In actual fact, they argue, Nazi ideology was never that important—and in any case, the Nazi regime like all others was subject to "routinization," the iron law according to which revolutions lose their impetus through the passing of time, human nature, and the need to make concessions for various reasons. (Similar views have been expressed by revisionist writers in the Soviet field.) Yet this "law" hardly applied in Nazi Germany: as already noted, Hitler had only six years to make domestic changes, and in this period the trend was certainly toward radicalization rather than toward moderation. What would have happened if Germany had won the war is another question altogether, but in any case the "law" of routinization disregards some of the basic features of totalitarianism, in particular the fact that the

* One of the first American protagonists was Edward N. Petersen, *The Limits of Hitler's Power* (1969).

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power concentrated in a few hands is so great that it can be defeated only from the outside.

Functionalism puts excessive emphasis on "objective" social factors. It largely ignores ideology, it trivializes the crimes of dictators and makes them appear almost harmless. In the functionalist perspective, indeed, there seems little to choose between life in a dictatorship and a democracy; there as here people are born, go to school, work, and eventually die. Hitler in this view turns into a near-figurehead, a modern Hamlet unable to make up his mind and only half-aware of what is going on around him. So many other historical culprits, individuals as well as "structures," have been found by the functionalists in their searches that any competent lawyer acting for Hitler and Nazism in the court of history could without great difficulty obtain a verdict of diminished responsibility by reason of extenuating circumstances. This kind of interpretation is a travesty of what really occurred.

Yet as in the field of Soviet studies, the functionalists, though they have enjoyed a vogue, have finally failed to displace the older understanding of the nature of Nazism. Stephen F. Cohen (in *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*) has invoked a parallel between the totalitarianism debate in Soviet and in Nazi studies:

> Uncharitably, we might contrast the post-revisionist situation in Sovietology to that in Nazi studies, where a totalitarianism school also once prevailed. A major scholar in that field tells us: "Each new detailed study of the realities of life in Nazi Germany shows how inadequate the concept of totalitarianism is."*

But in actual fact the debate over Nazism does not provide any comfort to revisionists in the Soviet field. Despite the anti-totalitarianism trend in recent German historiography, it would be difficult to think of a single major figure in the field willing to abandon the concept, and this applies even to those who for a variety of reasons find it not wholly satisfactory. The anti-totalitarianism upsurge has had less to do with the shortcomings of the concept than with the fact that it was politically inconvenient to a new generation of scholars and writers anxious to absolve the German past of its unique character and to see Nazism as just another variant of a general modern disease.

But intellectual fashions tend to change; a better gauge of opinion is to be found in the leading German scholarly review, *Neue Politische Literatur* ("New Political Literature") which every few years features massive review articles on specific topics. In 1975 the review article on totalitarianism noted that the concept was on its last legs, in a "state of agony." The 1983 article was entitled: "Renaissance of the Totalitarianism Concept?" There is reason to believe that by the next review, the question mark will have been dropped.

IV

THE debate over the character of Nazism is now mainly of historical interest. By contrast, the question of whether totalitarianism survives in the contemporary world and has a future remains one of the key issues of our time. Most proponents of the various "pluralistic" models, after all, have been driven (some openly) less by scholarly consideration than by a desire to prove that the Soviet Union is neither as evil nor as dangerous as the totalitarianism model suggests; others have been intent on finding a rationale for supporting or coopting Marxist revolutions in the Third World.

In other words, the crucial problem is not whether the Soviet Union or China or some Third World country can be made to fit into a concept, old or new, simple or elaborate, for purposes of classification. Definitions are never absolutely perfect, and classification, of great value in botany or zoology, is far more problematical in international politics. All democracies (like Tolstoy's happy families) are alike, while tyrannies (like unhappy families) are tyrannies in different ways. The basic task is not to find ingenious formulas but to reach a deeper understanding of the essential character of certain political regimes, and the direction in which they are likely to develop.

This much we can say after thirty-five years of analysis and discussion: in the Soviet Union no dissent will be tolerated which will endanger the perpetuation of the regime and the hold of the leadership. Basic political reform (or revolution), which is possible in an authoritarian set-up, is not possible under the Soviet system—not, at least, in the short or medium-range perspective. In this sense, the Soviet regime is still totalitarian, but that does not mean, as the exiled Soviet philosopher Alexander Zinoviev has asserted, that it will last forever. Everything is subject to the law of change, and in circumstances which no one can foresee today the Soviet Union might several decades from now begin to transform itself. Even in the shorter run there might be some economic reforms, overdue in any case, and the resistance to some harmless Western fashions, intellectual or sartorial, might cease.

But there are no cogent grounds for believing that either economic reform or the introduction of rock music will give major impetus to a democratization of Soviet politics. If the "cult of personality," the permanent mass purges, and some other specific features of the Stalinist regime have been abolished, or at least greatly reduced in scope, the reason is that these measures not only proved unnecessary to perpetuating the role of the party hierarchy, they actually threatened it.

* James Joll, the source quoted by Cohen, is a major scholar but not in the field of totalitarianism.

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The party leadership has not forgotten that Stalin, after all, liquidated proportionately many more Communists than other Soviet citizens; no Communist in his right mind wants a recurrence of this.

Czarist Russia was not a particularly effective regime; it was run by a mere few hundred thousand officials and other pillars of society. But it still took three years of war in which the country suffered one defeat after another to overthrow czarist rule. The Communist party has many more cadres, and in modern conditions social and political control of the masses has become much easier—provided always that there is no split in the ruling stratum. This is the one mortal danger facing such a system, but there are millions of people in the Soviet Union who have a vested interest in the survival of the present order, and who would go to great lengths to prevent its break-up. Nor should one assume that the Soviet people are themselves seething with discontent. They may complain and grumble, but the majority cannot envisage a different regime. In this Zinoviev has a point.

THE prospects in the Third World seem brighter. Most of these countries are dictatorships, but except, precisely, for the Communist regimes in China, Cuba, Vietnam, and perhaps a few others, they have not yet reached a stage of social, cultural, and technical development in which totalitarianism can be successfully imposed; there is no political party or ideology to provide control and cohesion. True, a few non-Communist regimes have moved in a totalitarian direction—Egypt under Nasser, Syria under Assad, and Iraq under Sadam Hussein. The hold of the leaders in these regimes is quite strong owing to the great effectiveness of the political police and tight control over the officer corps. But political police and army alone do not make for totalitarian rule; these regimes usually stand and fall with the person of the leader, and once he disappears anything can happen. Seen in this light, such regimes are authoritarian; the changes that have taken place in a totalitarian direction are not irreversible, not even in the short run.

As for that other contemporary phenomenon, radical nationalism combined with fanatical religious belief à la Khomeini, its resemblance to traditional despotism—which was often quite durable and lasted for long periods—would still appear much greater than to modern totalitarianism. Thus, in a long-term perspective there may be reason for cautious optimism so far as the more extreme forms of repression in those countries are concerned—though this is far from predicting a trend toward freedom there.

In Eastern Europe, and possibly in China, there is also the chance of an evolution, however slow, toward some modern version of bureaucratic autocracy. At least such a development is conceivable there. Where it is not conceivable in the foreseeable future is in the Soviet Union. There, given the past, given the need to maintain the legitimacy of the regime against the enemies allegedly threatening it from without, and given the fear of freedom among rulers and ruled alike, czarist-style autocracy, however much updated, must seem as inappropriate as Wilhelminian rule would have been in Germany in the 1930's. Something more effective is needed, and (until the day that fundamental change takes place) the word for that something is totalitarianism.

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The Cult of Hiroshima

André Ryerson

EVEN as the formal days of atonement in the Jewish and Christian calendar weaken, lose some of their traditional power, and attract fewer of the young to their rites, the age-old human impulse to critical self-scrutiny, with resulting acts of contrition to amend for past sins, takes on a new and secularized form. The date is August 6. Its icon is a mushroom cloud. The sin to be expiated is America's. And the event is Hiroshima.

I

THE casual observer can witness year by year the transformation of history into myth. With the predictability of a religious sacrament, the familiar images are pulled from the film vaults and presented to the public for viewing yet again—a sort of passion play for our time, with a cast of thousands and gorier than any Spanish depiction of the Cross.

This year, to break the growing pall of anonymity, newsmagazines commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the dropping of the bomb by detailing the minute-by-minute agonies of specific individuals at Hiroshima in 1945, those who perished, and those who painfully survived. Television showed American children taken to the exhibits at Hiroshima, choking and weeping with remorse and shame, for belonging to the nation that committed this crime. Evidently, while we would not think it proper to impose on the youth of Japan pangs of guilt for a war launched by their forebears in 1941, advanced opinion now seems ready to impose on the youth of the U.S. a more searing guilt for the way in which our country ended it.

The four hours consecrated to Hiroshima by PBS television on the evening of the fortieth anniversary this year encapsulated the now-standard view. A black social scientist from Harvard assured us that the dropping of the bomb was motivated by "racism." None of the five other guests saw fit to challenge this interpretation. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., the celebrated novelist, calmly declared that Hiroshima was an act of "genocide," and that by dropping the bomb the United States "went into the Auschwitz business." Only one of the six guests (William Manchester, the lone historian) saw reason to object to this. The next three hours were given over to films, interspersed with commentary by an MIT scientist who had worked on the bomb and in remorse has since devoted his spare time to "peace" activities.

The first film, *The Day After Trinity*, gave a fair and even eloquent account of the decision to build the atomic bomb. But as it headed to the finish, and Japan instead of Germany loomed as the designated target, a distant crunch of ideological gears was felt, guilt began to flower, interviews concentrated almost exclusively on the scientists who later decided Hiroshima was a profoundly wrong decision, and the film concluded with an outright historical falsehood: that the United States did nothing to try to control the power of the atom it had unleashed. (Somehow, the Baruch and Lilienthal proposals for the international control of atomic energy and weapons—which Bertrand Russell considered so generous he thought America should present it to the Soviets not as a proposal but as an ultimatum—managed to slip the minds of the film's producers.)

There followed an animated Japanese film which even more perfectly served the cause of "peace activists" determined to transform history into myth. The scene is Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Japanese people are seen going about their own business, children are at play, a trolley tinkles gaily down the street, a mother bares her breast tenderly to nurse her babe, and the only hint that a war might be going on is vaguely suggested by a man in uniform going to his lookout post to scan the skies. Then a silver plane appears. A smiling little boy points to it. Suddenly a flash, and hell on earth is loosed—peeling flesh, dead babies, blood-encased bodies, carbonized corpses in grotesque postures.

This was a fairy tale of malevolence as neat as any that could be conceived, and here we had in its purest form the contemporary myth of Hiroshima. People are pursuing their daily lives, and for no rhyme or reason are blasted out of exist-

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ence by distant, cold, technologically diabolical Americans. Small wonder that Hiroshima, presented thus, impresses the young around the world as a monstrous crime for which Americans are commanded to feel an endless guilt.

That such feelings of guilt are the aim of Western commemorations of Hiroshima, certainly, is unmistakable to anyone who has attended them. Where once such ceremonies were limited to Quakers, today all manner of activist groups, political and religious, old leftists, young pacifists, environmentalists, mainline churches, Eastern cultists, the hopeful and the frightened, peppered with secular liberals long out of the habit of Yom Kippur or Lent, gather ecumenically to mark Hiroshima Day as a date worthy of our shame and obloquy. To ensure that those congregated express themselves beyond mere tears and symbolic grief they are invited henceforth to "work actively for peace" so as to expiate in a meaningful way their understandable feelings of anguish. Exactly what "working for peace" should consist of, the more subtle public speakers and pastors do not say. They teach by example, through their own support of "peace" groups, through the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on nuclear war, through the nuclear-freeze campaign, and through acts of protest and even civil disobedience against defense spending, local military installations, and the Pentagon.

Increasingly they also teach, directly, through the schools. Now our children can be called on to stare at the icon of a mushroom cloud not just on August 6 but on any day of the year. Boards of education have been lobbied assiduously to approve the introduction of "peace education" into the school curriculum from kindergarten through grade 12, and small towns to big cities such as Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Milwaukee, San Francisco, and the two largest—New York and Los Angeles County—have given their imprimatur to what have invariably turned out to be highly politicized programs of instruction drawn up either by nuclear-freeze groups or out-and-out pacifists.* The entire state of California is about to make such programs mandatory for the children of its 25 million people. (Oregon has already done so.) The powerful National Education Association has taken a leading role in this cause. Films, grisly photographs, and detailed descriptions of what the Hiroshima residents endured at American hands enjoy a premier place in the effort to trace on the minds of the young the stigmata of permanent remorse, disgust at the mad "build-up" by our country of weapons far worse than the Hiroshima bomb, and a metaphysical resolve to pursue nuclear disarmament at any cost.

II

THAT there is something not quite *right* about all this, seemed as clear to some Americans this past August as was the equally apparent impropriety of protesting it. Who would deny the suffering of the victims of Hiroshima? The ill-articulated reactions of popular irritation, the grumblings from American veterans of the Pacific, the angry letters to the networks for their failure to stress why it was we dropped the bomb, expressed what "sophisticated" people may consider crude emotions. On closer scrutiny, however, these crude emotions may constitute not just signs of basic health but a more accurate understanding of the moral complexities of forty years ago. Since August 6 is not going to disappear from our calendar, and since the evolution of Hiroshima into myth has been accomplished by isolating and removing it from the context of the war in which it occurred, the proper response is patiently, deliberately, and repeatedly to recontextualize it.

To begin with, if we wish yearly to remember the personal sufferings of those who died in World War II, surely one may ask why we ignore the millions of victims of Japanese fascism—Koreans, Manchurians, Chinese, Indochinese, Burmese, Malays, and Filipinos? After all, those who died at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were made to do so for a reason—to end the war—whereas the millions of people killed and wounded by the Japanese suffered for no reason at all, were *victims* in the root sense of being truly innocent. Yet thanks to contemporary revisionism, the primary victims—the victims of Japanese aggression across the Pacific—have been forgotten, allowed to slip down some black hole of cultural memory, while the secondary victims—the Japanese themselves—have been raised to a privileged public altar. It is as if the war in Europe were to be commemorated by yearly attention to German civilians who died in the bombing of Dresden and Hamburg, while the victims of Nazi aggression on the battlefield and in the death camps were to be consigned to oblivion.

When it comes to the decision taken by Truman and his advisers to drop the bomb, a similarly selective amnesia seems to operate, both with regard to the actual circumstances that existed at the time and with regard to other possible courses of action open to the U.S. Thus, many of those who denounce Truman for dropping the bomb cite an alternative option: the United States could have invited the Japanese to witness a demonstration of the new weapon on some empty atoll, and the spectacle would have sufficed to make them acknowledge defeat and accept surrender. It is a nice idea. Unfortunately, this scenario ignores two sets of facts. The first concerns the practicality of such a demonstration; the second concerns the philosophy of death and war that prevailed in Japan at the time and that dominated the think-

* For a detailed study of these programs, see *Educating for Disaster*, by Thomas B. Smith (Mark Books, 1985, Evanston, IL 60204). See also "Terrorizing Children," by Joseph Adelson and Chester E. Finn, Jr., COMMENTARY, April 1985.

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ing of the Japanese leadership until the very end.

It was Dr. Arthur Holly Compton, a scientist-adviser to the interim committee on the ultimate use of the new weapon, who explicitly proposed to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson that the bomb first be shown the Japanese by way of demonstration. The committee then discussed the proposal. The objections were numerous.

First, if the test were done on neutral soil the Japanese might think it was a fake, accomplished with a massive amount of ordinary TNT.

Second, if it were to be dropped on an isolated spot in Japan, the need to notify the Japanese as to time and place would allow them to shoot down the plane carrying the bomb.

Third, the actual bomb devices were new and scarcely tested. Any number of things could malfunction. What would be the psychological effect on Japanese leaders of a flub?

Fourth, only two bombs were available at the time, and every day the war continued meant death for thousands.

Fifth, the very idea of demonstrating the bomb ran counter to its purpose—to shock the Japanese out of their faith that dying in war was a noble and heroic enterprise.

Nothing is more natural for a democracy at war than for its leader—elected by the people and answerable to them—to attempt to ensure that victory is attained with the minimum loss of soldiers' lives. For an industrial democracy, firepower is the means to that end. The almost extravagant use of material firepower in order to save young men's lives has been called, rightly, "the American way of war." Using the atom bomb against Japan was simply the ultimate step in an approach to war that marked the Pacific conflict from the moment Douglas MacArthur took command.

The Japanese view was close to the reverse of the American. Death in war was not to be avoided, but to be sought. The Shinto cult of radical self-sacrifice taught that suicide was glorious while surrender was unthinkable disgrace. So numerous were the suicide volunteers who spontaneously arose in the ranks of the Japanese armed forces that they were organized separately for routine training in the technique of air or naval *kamikaze*, the way other soldiers were taught to operate a radio or drive a jeep. One-man suicide submarines were specially designed and manufactured for the purpose, and human torpedoes or *kaiten* followed, employed by the hundreds against Allied shipping.

But it was in the air that the *kamikaze* ethos proved most effective; at Okinawa alone the Special Attack Corps sent as many as 1,500 volunteers against American ships. In addition to the spiritual satisfactions of a glorious suicide, the Japanese considered this an effective means of countering the American advantage in materiel. A lone suicidal airman could sink a whole destroyer. The motto of the Special Attack Corps was, "one plane, one ship."

The peculiar disgrace that the Japanese attached to surrender was one of the causes of the despicable treatment American POW's suffered at the hands of the Japanese—far worse than their treatment by the Nazis. The reason lay in the very fact of surrender. For the Japanese this made the American POW's the equivalent of "subhumans," and in consequence there was no compunction about using them for experimental purposes, either to inject them with diseases or to observe the effects on them of weapons and exposure. All this was quite apart from the ordinary cruelty in warfare for which the Japanese made themselves notorious in all the nations of the Orient they conquered.

Japanese revulsion at the idea of surrender was seen throughout the war. The number of prisoners yielded was minimal. When U.S. troops succeeded in taking Okinawa not only did Japanese uniformed men commit suicide in droves to avoid the degradation of being captured, but thousands of ordinary Japanese civilians did so as well. Mothers with their babies in their arms leaped off cliffs to their death; student nurses, gathered in small groups, blew themselves up with a single hand grenade.

As American forces advanced closer to the Japanese mainland, this ferocity and refusal to surrender, clearly witnessed at Iwo Jima, did not diminish but increased. The Japanese military leaders used it to argue—quite logically—that a battle on the soil of Japan would result in a toll of American dead in numbers not yet seen and would certainly produce the most sensational and bloody climax to the Pacific war.

THE American plan of invasion (until news of the successful Trinity test reached Truman at Potsdam) was to land three-quarters of a million U.S. troops on Kyushu on November 1. (This would be the *initial* landing, already four times the troop level at Normandy.) The Japanese for their part had prepared KETSU-GO or Operation Decision: 2,350,000 soldiers would crush the Americans as they landed on the beaches. They would be backed by four million army and navy civilian employees, a special garrison of a quarter-million, and a mammoth civil militia of 28 million men and women armed with everything from feudal muskets to bamboo spears.

The leadership repeatedly made clear its intention to fight to the last man, woman, child. As late as June, following the devastating incendiary bombing of Tokyo, the entire Cabinet issued this statement: "With a faith born of eternal loyalty as our inspiration, we shall—thanks to the advantages of our terrain and the unity of our nation—prosecute the war to the bitter end in order to uphold our national essence, protect the imperial land, and achieve our goals of conquest." Prime

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Minister Suzuki spelled it out more colloquially at a press conference: "If our hundred million people fight with the resolve to sacrifice their lives, I believe it is not at all impossible to attain the great goal of preserving the essence of Japan."

The slaughter that would have followed an American land invasion of Japan would have been unimaginable on both sides. Estimates of a half-million U.S. soldiers and one million Japanese killed are not high but low. Any American President deciding to undertake such a bloody exchange of lives while refusing to use the atom bomb once the option presented itself would almost certainly have been impeached by the American people and condemned at the bar of history.

If anything, Truman and his aides exaggerated the shock effect that atomic blasts would have on the Japanese leadership. Even *after* both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese Cabinet was deadlocked and could not agree on the Allied terms of surrender. General Umezu expressed his confidence that future atomic attacks could be stemmed by anti-aircraft measures, while on land "we will be able to destroy the major part of an invading force." The War Minister, General Anami, told the Cabinet: "That we will inflict severe losses on the enemy when he invades Japan is certain, and it is not impossible to reverse the situation and pull victory out of defeat." When several civilian ministers timidly ventured that the people were tired and that food shortages threatened, the War Minister snapped: "Everyone understands all that, but we must fight to the end no matter how great the odds against us!" He concluded with finality, "Our men will simply refuse to lay down their arms. They know they are forbidden to surrender. There is really no alternative for us but to continue the war."

Despite two atomic bombs, then, the Cabinet could not accept the idea of conceding defeat. As John Toland reveals in his fascinating and monumental *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire*, the surrender of Japan was finally the result of a bold initiative by Prince Kido. As Privy Seal, Kido was in a position to sound out the Emperor, who was constitutionally forbidden from initiating policy; Kido found he favored surrender. Prime Minister Suzuki now also inclined to surrender, so Kido proposed the unprecedented move of having Suzuki ask the Emperor—at an imperial conference with the full Cabinet present—what his opinion was. The Emperor would delicately indicate his preference, and the military would be confronted with a *fait accompli*, for how could they defy the Emperor's will?

Yet even though the imperial conference went just as Prince Kido planned, that too was not the end of it. Once out of the Emperor's presence, various military leaders began having second thoughts. Not just one but several plots were hatched for a palace coup to seize power, isolate the Emperor, and pursue the war. Admiral Onishi, the organizer of the *kamikaze* corps, said to conspirators of the Hatanaka group: "We must throw ourselves headlong into the plan and make it come true. If we are prepared to sacrifice 20 million Japanese lives in a 'special attack' effort, victory will be ours!" General Anami was disposed to sacrifice still more lives while holding out the hope of less tangible results: "Even if we fail in the attempt, 100 million people are ready to die for honor, glorifying the deeds of the Japanese race in recorded history!"

To succeed in averting the surrender of Japan it was essential that the conspirators seize the recording the Emperor had made calling on his people to envisage "enduring the unendurable and suffering what is insufferable." The insurgents narrowly failed in the attempt. Their leaders then duly and by various means committed *hara-kiri*.

As Japanese who were adults at the time later testified, the greatest shock of those days was not the news of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was hearing for the first time in their lives the voice of the Emperor, speaking the unspeakable, and instructing them to surrender. They could hardly believe it.

III

These facts, readily available to anyone interested, explode the claim that the Japanese were ready to surrender prior to the dropping of the atom bombs, and that Hiroshima and Nagasaki amounted to gratuitous acts of barbarism. Almost as foolish is the claim that the Soviet entry into the Pacific war was enough to make the Japanese surrender. The Germans, after all, had maintained two war fronts without seeing in this circumstance a reason to surrender, and only seven weeks before Hiroshima, Prime Minister Suzuki—a "moderate"—confessed himself astonished that the Germans had not fought to the last man.

It required, finally, the combination of all three events—Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the August 9 declaration of war on Japan by the Soviets—to convince even the civilian leadership of the need for surrender. It then required the stratagem of Prince Kido to outfox the military leaders, a stratagem which in turn had to survive their attempts at a palace coup. The claim that the bomb was not a necessary element in this chain of events simply cannot withstand an examination of the historical record.

Neither can the outrageous and impertinent charge that the United States dropped the bomb on Hiroshima out of "racism." Proving this would require, first of all, showing that the bomb was not needed for reasons of war, and that the Japanese leadership was previously disposed to surrender—claims plainly contrary to fact. But even if the bomb had not been needed to compel surrender,

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end the war promptly, and thus save *Japanese* as well as American lives, the "racism" thesis would founder on the fact that the bomb had been developed in the first place with Nazi Germany—a white European nation—in mind. Nor had this supposed racial advantage preserved the Germans from Allied bombings quite as deadly as what befell Hiroshima, as those who survived Dresden and Hamburg can testify. Likewise impaled on these same humble points of fact is Gar Alperovitz's thesis, advanced in *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, that Truman used the atom bomb simply to intimidate the Soviets, the Japanese being, so to speak, gratuitous victims of American cold-war malevolence (even before any conventionally accepted date for when the cold war actually began).

The real meaning of Hiroshima is that war is an extremely nasty business, and that we must do everything consonant with our freedom and our honor to assure that such terrible events do not recur. Modern warfare is particularly trying on the conscience of decent people because the tension between the need to save one's own men and the requirement indiscriminately to kill the enemy's rises with each "improvement" in the destructive capacity of the weapons, thereby narrowing the scope of moral choice into a series of increasingly grim alternatives. The decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima was just such a choice. It was almost certainly the correct choice. But that does not make it any more pleasant in retrospect to contemplate. The evil, if evil there was, lay not in the dropping of the bomb but in the circumstances, i.e., the war itself, that compelled Truman and his advisers to make the choice they did.

Intelligent thinkers, were such unexpectedly to arise in the television business, would begin to grasp that the evil of World War II is not to be found by flying a crew to Hiroshima to record interviews, but by inquiring a little more studiously into the causes of that war. Those causes in the first instance lay in the mad and aggressive myths of superiority on which the German and Japanese people were too long fed, but also in their perception of the Western democracies as decadent, hedonistic, and timorous societies that would be reluctant to fight.

Western pacifists of the 1930's were significantly responsible for creating and abetting the latter impression. Oblivious of history's lessons, and armed now with a powerful myth of guilt and shame, their descendants are spreading the selfsame notions today. The consequences then were death, suffering, and destruction on a hitherto unimaginable scale. If old follies are embraced anew, what will be the consequences tomorrow?

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Reading Primo Levi

Fernanda Eberstadt

AFTER almost forty years of growing literary renown in his native Italy and in Western Europe, Primo Levi, a chemist by profession and a survivor af Auschwitz, is at last making a name for himself in the United States. In the past year, American publishers have brought out, to universal critical acclaim, two of Levi's most recent works: *The Periodic Table* (published in Italy in 1975),* a wry and ingeniously constructed history of his career as chemist, and *If Not Now, When?* (1982),† a novel of Jewish partisans fighting the fleeing German army at the end of World War II. Three more books are expected in early 1986: a reissue of his twin classics, *If This Is a Man* (1947) and *The Truce* (1963), and *Lilith*,** a collection of short stories. Levi, whose career in Italy was crowned in 1982 when he won the prestigious Viareggio and Campiello prizes, is thus on his way as well to becoming a figure on the American literary scene.

BORN in 1919, the son of a cultivated middle-class family which settled in the Piedmont in 1500 after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Primo Levi belongs to a particular segment of Italian Jewry whose relation to Italy on the one hand, and to its Jewishness on the other, is of great historical interest.

The Italian Jewish community, whose origins reach back to the time of ancient Rome, played a significant role in the founding of the modern state. Italian Jewish patriots figured prominently in the Napoleonic invasion and in the Risorgimento, and with the general emancipation which followed Italy's unification in 1870, Jews rose quickly to eminence in every area of national life. Many were ennobled for service to their country.

Although Jews, at least in the past two centuries, never constituted more than one-tenth of 1 percent of the country's population, it is estimated that as high as 8 percent of university professors in Italy before World War II were Jewish. That Jews should have chosen academia is perhaps less unusual than the shining preeminence they achieved in government and in the armed forces. By the time of World War I—a single generation after non-Catholics had been given the vote—there had been two dozen Senators of Jewish origin in the National Assembly, two Prime Ministers (Sidney Sonnino and Luigi Luzzatti), two Ministers of Finance, and a Minister of Defense.

With the outbreak of war in 1914, Italian Jews reaffirmed their reputation for patriotism and military valor. Out of a community of only 40,000 (according to the 1911 census), over 1,000 received decorations; eleven rose to become generals. Of Italy's three university professors who fell in battle, two were Jewish and the third was a half-Jew.

This civic zeal, and this demonstrated achievement in many areas of national life, are tributes in part to the acceptance in Italian society which Jews had long enjoyed—an acceptance which the emancipation only formalized. As the historian Cecil Roth writes of post-emancipation Italy: "There was in the vast mass of the people not even the *arrière-pensée* of anti-Jewish feeling. Whether it was in parliamentary elections or university appointments, charitable organizations or social gatherings, the question of a man being or not being a Jew rarely came into question, except perhaps in those circles which objected no less to Lutherans and freemasons."

There was, however, a price to be paid for such full and distinguished participation in society. Throughout the 19th century, Italian Jews became increasingly assimilated. Roth, lamenting the fact that most of the great Italian Jewish statesmen and soldiers were "Jews only by virtue of descent," notes that Italy had become "a byword in the Jewish world for the completeness of emancipation on the one hand, for its deadly corrosive

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* Translated by Raymond Rosenthal, Schocken, 233 pp., $16.95. Two chapters of this book appeared in COMMENTARY (in different translation): "Vanadium," March 1977 and "Iron," August 1977.

† Translated by William Weaver, Summit, 349 pp., $15.95.

** *If This Is a Man* and *The Truce*, both translated by Stuart Wolf, will be brought out by Summit under the respective titles of *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Reawakening*; the former is also available as a Collier (Macmillan) paperback, 157 pp., $3.95. *Lilith and Other Stories*, translated by Ruth Feldman, will also be published by Summit.

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potentialities on the other." And, as Primo Levi himself has observed, "Equality was the fruit of the largely secular character of the Risorgimento. Participation in the revival struggle brought with it, if not an obligation, then at least a decided invitation to secular living."* Religious observance declined; synagogues that had been open for prayer three times daily could no longer assemble a quorum on the Sabbath; mixed marriages soared. According to the historian Renzo de Felice, from 1930 to 1937, 30 percent of Italian Jews married Gentiles, compared with only 11 percent in Germany (1934 census), while in 1938—the year of Mussolini's racial laws restricting Jewish social and economic activity—the number of mixed marriages rose as high as 44 percent.

For many Italian Jews, however, there must have seemed nothing deadly or corrosive in this slow and half-conscious loss of tradition. Because of the relative absence of either popular or official anti-Semitism, and the social standing enjoyed by many Italian Jewish families, Italian Jews rarely had to make a choice between career and position on the one hand and their religious and ethnic identity on the other, and hence could afford to be proud or indulgent of what Jewishness remained to them. There came into being something familiar enough from the American scene: a large body of "holiday Jews," who went to synagogue on the High Holy Days and ate prosciutto and shrimp the rest of the year, Jews for whom Judaism was the expression of a kind of subsidiary "ethnic pride" whose value was in large measure nostalgic.

In the work of the few Italian writers who deal with their Jewishness at all—writers like Primo Levi, Giorgio Bassani (author of *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*), or Natalia Ginzburg (two of her works, *All Our Yesterdays* and *The Little Virtues*, have just been reissued in English in this country)†—religion and ethnicity alike appear as something homey, sentimental, amusing, surrounded by the aura of childhood. For these writers, Jewishness belongs to the memory cupboard with fat uncles, eccentric aunts, good smells from the kitchen, and—for Levi—a language known only in code words, to be used in front of servants. For Primo Levi, before his deportation to Auschwitz, Jewishness indeed was little more than a negative presence. "A Jew is somebody who at Christmas does not have a tree, who shouldn't eat salami but does, who has learned a little bit of Hebrew at thirteen and then has forgotten it."

Still, however much of Jewish tradition was frittered away through assimilation and intermarriage, many educated Italian Jews seem nonetheless to have retained what H. Stuart Hughes has called (in his invaluable book, *The Silver Age of Italian Jewry*) a "residual Jewish consciousness." This consciousness, moreover, was no cloistered virtue, but a feisty devil which moved to the fore whenever Judaism was under fire or liberty of conscience threatened. A characteristic expression came from Luigi Luzzatti, journalist and Prime Minister of Italy, who in 1909 told the Socialist parliamentary leader that although an unrepentant deist, "I was born a Jew, and I return passionately to being one whenever I am criticized for being Jewish or my being Jewish puts me in danger."**

For his first decade or so in power, Mussolini enjoyed a reputation for philo-Semitism and did much to win Jewish support (which, indeed, he succeeded to a certain extent in getting). Declaring himself a Zionist to the Zionist leaders Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Goldmann, Mussolini promised on various occasions to find the Jews a homeland more suitable than the "ridiculous" one of Palestine offered by the British; he took in Jewish refugees from Russia, Germany, and Eastern Europe; he cultivated cordial relations with Italian rabbinic leaders; and in 1930-31 he introduced a series of longed-for measures according the Jewish community legal status and dividing it into twenty-six smaller zones with powers of religious administration and political representation. (This move, popular at the time among Jewish religious figures, later proved invaluable in helping the Nazis round up Jews for deportation.)

These concessions, however, went hand in hand with such assaults upon the confidence and good faith of Italian Jews as the Lateran Pact of 1929 establishing Roman Catholicism as a state religion, fascist support for Arab rebels in Palestine, and increasingly virulent anti-Semitic tirades in the government-controlled press. Mussolini's attitude toward the Jews was, in short, complex, and intimately connected with his shifting world views. What seems to have remained constant throughout his career was a deep-rooted and unquestioning belief in the existence of a powerful political entity called World Jewry, on whose good side he was anxious to be. Only when Hitler's unopposed successes proved the power of "international Jewry" to be negligible, and when Mussolini's own shortcomings as Hitler's partner abroad made conformity to Nazi doctrine at home the more pressing, did he declare an open war against the Jews.

Thus, the summer of 1938 saw the official adoption in fascist Italy of Nazi racial theories. In the autumn of 1938 came the deeply unpopular race laws, forbidding mixed marriages, ordering the

* "Beyond Survival," *Prooftexts* (January 1984).

† *All Our Yesterdays*, translated by Angus Davidson, Carcanet, 300 pp., $14.95; *The Little Virtues*, translated by Dick Davis, Carcanet, 110 pp., $14.95.

** Quoted in Michael Ledeen, "Italian Jews and Fascism," *Judaism*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Summer 1969. According to H. Stuart Hughes, however, Natalia Ginzburg, for one, extinguished even this residual ethnic pride after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 when, declaring herself regretful that one could no longer imagine Israel "little" and "defenseless," she ceased altogether to write about Jews.

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expulsion of those Jewish refugees whom Mussolini formerly had welcomed, and barring Jews from institutes of higher learning, from the armed forces, from many forms of economic and social activity, and from the fascist party (membership in which was a virtual prerequisite to earning a livelihood).

To Primo Levi, then a nineteen-year-old student of chemistry in Turin, it was in effect the racial laws that made him a Jew. Levi belonged to a generation of young, educated, middle-class Italians, both Christians and Jews, who grew up under fascism (Levi was only three years old when Mussolini seized power) and who were in a sense unmanned by it. The anti-fascist resistance of earlier years—much of which had been based in Levi's native city of Turin—had for the most part been silenced by the time these children came of age: heroes like the Russian-born Leone Ginzburg, Carlo Levi (no relation), Enzo Sereni, and the Rosselli brothers were already abroad, imprisoned, or murdered. Ignorant of even the possibility of active resistance to a regime they found repellent, Levi and his friends grew up "superficial, passive, cynical." In *The Periodic Table*, Levi deftly describes their withdrawal from political reality and, later, from the war itself into a world of conversation, country hikes, poetry, chaste flirtation, and, in Levi's case, chemistry, whose demonstrable truths seemed the very antithesis of fascism's bluster.

It is revealing of the emotional constriction of these young people that their voiced objections to fascism were largely aesthetic in nature: the young Levi scorned fascism's highflown rhetoric and mistrusted its stifling insistence on homogeneity, which, he instinctively understood, also meant trouble for the Jews. And it is indicative of their profound demoralization that Levi and his friends felt equally estranged from the Allied cause. To these young intellectuals, the United States and Nazi Germany were like two grim Titans fighting overhead; since each was invincible, the war would go on forever. "The Allies were masters of the sky, perhaps in the end they would win and fascism would end—but it was their business, they were rich and powerful, they had the airplane carriers and the Liberators."

It was only with the first signs of a decisive Allied victory and with the collapse of the fascist regime on July 25, 1943, that Levi found within himself the will to resist. Caught in Milan after the Nazis had seized northern Italy and established there the detested Salo Republic which sent almost 8,500 Jews to the death camps of Poland, Levi took to the hills with a few friends and a pearl-handled pistol, hoping eventually to join up with the famed resistance movement *Giustizia e Libertà*. Instead, his band was captured by the fascist militia in December 1943. Levi, who mistakenly thought it safer, if caught by Italian fascists, to declare himself a Jew rather than a member of the partisans, was sent to the detention camp at Fossoli; in February 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz. Of the 650 men, women, and children in Levi's transport, only twenty returned.

In Auschwitz, Levi was assigned to a labor camp attached to the synthetic rubber factory at Monowitz-Buna (a tower of Babel built and manned by slave labor, which in four years never produced so much as half a pound of rubber). After some months, he found work as a chemist in a camp laboratory. His survival Levi attributes to three factors: to his relatively privileged position as a chemist; to an Italian civilian worker who brought him food every day for six months; and to a case of scarlet fever contracted on the eve of liberation which kept him in the infirmary while the Germans evacuated 20,000 prisoners on a march from which no one emerged alive.

After his liberation by the Red Army in January 1945, Levi joined an aimless Soviet-sponsored migration of displaced persons, and was eventually returned to Italy by way of the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Rumania—a trek described with much wit and good humor in his second book of memoirs, *The Truce*. In the four decades since the war, Levi has lived in his family's house in Turin, publishing his occasional short stories, novels, and reminiscences and working as director of a chemical factory until his retirement in 1977 to write full-time.

As a writer, Primo Levi represents a relatively unfamiliar combination in the literature of the Nazi concentration camps. He is a survivor without Jewish—or, more specifically, without East European—inflections, a memoirist endowed with all the fruits of a classical Mediterranean education, an aesthete, a skeptic, a mild, equable, and eminently civilized man who is more at home in Dante and Homer than in the Bible. Some of the qualities he brings to his work—secularism, cultivation, elitism (coupled with an attitude of amused affection toward the common man), and a lack of deep familiarity with Jewish history or religion—are typical of his generation of Italian Jewish writers. Virtues that are his alone include precision, economy, subtlety, a dry and rueful wit, an intimate understanding of the dramatic potential of understatement, and a certain frigidity of manner which combines effectively with the explosiveness of his subject matter.

All these virtues find preeminent expression in Levi's brief masterpiece, *If This Is a Man*. Begun immediately upon his return to Turin from the camps, and first published in 1947, *If This Is a Man* is the story of his ten months in Auschwitz. Despite the terrifying immediacy of the experience it relates, it is an elegantly constructed and remarkably compressed piece of work, blessed with a low-key but frequently poetical style of utterance and marked by Levi's efforts both to render concrete and to transcend the destruction he witnessed.

In this book, Levi sets forth in patient yet urgent

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detail all that he saw in the camp. He describes the routines of daily life, of reveille, meals, latrines, work squads, sleep, the workings of the black market, the operations of the sick bay, the prisoners' preparations for the "selection" in which some were chosen to be gassed and some spared. Levi delineates the social and national hierarchies which rose up in the camp, and, above all, examines how different kinds of men adapted to the lunatic netherworld of Auschwitz and what combination of qualities—including luck—enabled a prisoner to survive. In some ways the book is less a memoir than a sociological and psychological study elevated into a work of art.

What first strikes the reader entering the world here depicted is that Primo Levi did not miss a thing. This overeducated and inexperienced twenty-four-year-old dreamer kept his eyes open, from the moment of his disembarkation from the cattle car to the day of his liberation by the Red Army ten months later. Such are his efforts that not one muttered aside, not one sign on a washroom wall goes unrecorded; indeed, the reader cannot help suspecting that Levi, agnostic though he may have been, decided almost upon his arrival in the camp that he had been put on earth as God's spy, simply to go to Auschwitz and come back to tell the tale.

Along with Levi's native curiosity and attention to detail goes a scientist's mental tendency to make distinctions and to classify. Thus, in a spirit of inquiry he unveils "the funereal science of the numbers of Auschwitz, which epitomize the stages of the destruction of European Jewry." To camp veterans, the tattooed number on a prisoner's wrist tells the time of his entry into Auschwitz and hence his nationality, and from his nationality further characteristics follow:

> Everyone will treat with respect the numbers from 30,000 to 80,000. There are only a few hundred left and they represented the few survivals from the Polish ghettos. It is as well to watch out in commercial dealings with a 116,000 or a 117,000: they now number only about forty, but they represent the Greeks of Salonica, so take care they do not pull the wool over your eyes. As for the high numbers, they carry an essentially comic air about them like the words "freshman" and "conscript" in ordinary life. The typical high number is a corpulent, docile, and indolent fellow: he can be convinced that leather shoes are distributed at the infirmary to all those with delicate feet, and can be persuaded to run there and leave his bowl of soup "in your custody."

As this excerpt reveals, along with Levi's deliberate coolness of manner goes a gently mocking wit, which harps upon the droll and comical aspects of human degradation as a way of making bearable an outrage too massive to endure. This quality of Levi's (along with his elegant literary bearing) no doubt helps to account for his attractiveness to certain European and American intellectuals who (in the words of one of those admirers, Irving Howe) "are dismayed by the vulgarizations to which discourse on the Holocaust has recently been subjected" and who "wince at the shoddy rhetoric it evokes from publicists and politicians." Though quite a number of books have been written about Auschwitz by survivors, Levi's is one of the very few humorous ones.

BUT the book's central concern, as its title suggests, is in fact not so much with recording for posterity the particular historical catastrophe of Auschwitz as with defining what it is to be a man under conditions stripped of all that makes human nature human. In his preface, Levi writes that it is not his intention "to formulate new accusations" but rather "to furnish documentation for a quiet study of certain aspects of the human mind." This intention separates *If This Is a Man* from a book like Elie Wiesel's *Night*, with its swelling lament for the Nazis' destruction of a people and their civilization, and also from one like Tadeusz Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, a macabre exposé of human cupidity, brutality, and indifference. Rather, Levi chooses to dwell upon episodes in which ordinary individuals reveal their pluck, their endurance, their abiding decency, their reserves of integrity, and their boundless capacities for invention and initiative.

In the book's most famous passage, Levi encounters in a washroom the "good soldier" Steinlauf, recipient of an Iron Cross in World War I, a man in his forties who now is scrubbing himself vigorously with muddy water and drying himself on his cloth jacket. Why wash? demands Levi, who has already gone defiantly to seed, and to whom such an energy-wasteful display of obeisance to now-superfluous rites of home life comes as an affront to the skepticism which he holds to be the better part of common sense. He remonstrates with Steinlauf: "We will all die, we are all about to die." In the ten minutes between reveille and work, better to look at the sky and gather one's thoughts than to get wet and dirtier. To the contrary, Steinlauf responds: it is precisely because the camp is "a great machine to reduce us to beasts" that one must maintain at all costs the habits and principles of civilized life by keeping oneself clean, holding oneself straight, and going about one's business with dignity and propriety.

Paradoxically, then, the message of *If This Is a Man* seems to be not how easy it was to kill six million Jews but that it is, after all, as difficult to destroy a man as to create one. Though it does not gloss over the uglier human qualities which camp life brought to the fore, *If This Is a Man* places its stress on human strength and dignity. As such, it comes as a welcome antidote to the sometimes lopsided effects produced willy-nilly by Holocaust studies and by a literature saturated with images of helplessness, passivity, and wretchedness.

Yet although this brilliant and stirring book is

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full of moral resonance, it also suffers from the limitations of understanding which Levi has imposed on the events he describes. "We would like to consider that the *Lager* [camp] was preeminently a gigantic biological and social experiment," Levi writes, an occasion for observing, under impossibly ideal laboratory conditions, "what is essential and what adventitious to the conduct of the human animal in the struggle for life." By adopting, however ironically, this denatured pseudo-scientific pose, Levi deliberately glosses over the plain fact that the "experiment" of which he speaks was designed by a particular group of people, the Nazis, not to observe the human animal "in the struggle for life" but rather to wipe another particular group of people, the Jews, off the face of the earth. Levi in this book comes to many interesting and moving conclusions about the abilities and mental attitudes which enable prisoners to survive in an environment designed to kill them, but he says next to nothing of the circumstances that made the "experiment" possible, of the ultimate aims of the experimenters, or of the people against whom it was directed.

When it comes to interpreting the significance of this unprecedented cataclysm, moreover, Levi falls back on a rather hackneyed social psychology. The story of the death camps, he suggests in his preface, is the story of xenophobia run amok, the result of carrying to its logical conclusion the instinct "latent" in many men and nations that "every stranger is an enemy." Although this might be useful as an admonition to today's Europeans to mind their manners in dealing with the Turkish and North African migrant workers in their midst, it hardly answers to the Holocaust; certainly, it is inadequate as an explanation of why the destruction of the Jews was conceived precisely at a time and in a place in which the Jews had become thoroughly assimilated into society. Indeed, as a victim who himself hailed from a country in which the Jew had *never* been a stranger, but which had fallen under totalitarian rule, Levi was particularly well-placed to see that the origins of the Holocaust might be found to lie less in all our darkest impulses than in the kind of political system which alone in civilized nations can institutionalize such impulses.

To be sure, in thus stressing the "universal" aspect of the Holocaust, Levi is being true to the secular and humanistic tradition of Italian Jewry —a community to at least some of whose members Jewishness was no more (in his words) than "an almost negligible but curious fact, a small amusing anomaly, like having a crooked nose or freckles." As Levi later testified, it was only with his arrest and internment that he found himself "segregated from the 'normal' world and forcibly immersed in an exclusively Jewish environment." What is curious is that Levi, the acute observer of human manners, says nothing in *If This Is a Man* about his own reactions and impressions on being introduced for the first time to the highly distinctive and utterly alien world of East European Jewry, or of the religious life and ethnic traditions of the people among whom he lived—at exceptionally close quarters—for ten months. In *If This Is a Man* there are Poles, Hungarians, Frenchmen, and Italians in abundance, each with subtly detailed cultural characteristics, but there are no Jews as such.

It was only years later, in the volume of stories entitled *Lilith*, that Levi set out to portray the Jewish side of life in Auschwitz. *Lilith* is a collection of vignettes serving as footnotes or appendices to his tales of the camps. Some of these sketches are culled from Levi's later reading about the war and the Holocaust: the experiences of a Polish partisan who fought in Italy, or of a young Jew who survived the war disguised as a Hitler *Jugend*. Many are about religious Jews —cantors' and rabbis' sons who continued to practice their faith and to preserve their cultural and historical memories in the death camps.

These tales, told in a *faux-naif* manner reminiscent of Yiddish fabulists and utterly unlike Levi's characteristically polished and subtle style, are uneven, but although even at his worst Levi is deft and able to convey much in a few words, nevertheless he must be said to fail in his larger attempt to recreate something of the flavor of Jewish life in the camps. In part the problem is one of inauthenticity. Thus, in one tale a watchmaker from a remote Lithuanian village astounds his barracks chief—a German Communist—by refusing food on Yom Kippur since, as the narrator informs us, cooking on that day is labor considered "inadvisable" by "some commentators." (It is forbidden, and on no lesser authority than Leviticus; but perhaps more significantly, rabbinic authorities had actually laid a positive injunction upon Jewish inmates of the camps to eat on Yom Kippur, in order to preserve life.) But such missteps are no more than symptoms of a larger discomfort.

By his own admission, Primo Levi is the child of a peculiarly Italian credo that "nothing is of greater vanity than to force oneself to swallow whole a moral system elaborated by others, under another sky." In addition to this resistance to all "unproven revealed truths," Levi is simply cursed with a tin ear for religion, and is incapable of representing imaginatively the life of people who practice their faith "without any feeling of constraint, rebellion, or irony." The unfortunate literary consequence is that although he self-consciously sets out in these stories to reproduce the traditions of East European Jewry as they were preserved in the death camps of Poland, he unwittingly reduces that tradition's central component—the Jewish faith—to the status of an archaic cult, a magpie's nest of quaint fables and "maniacally subtle" prohibitions.

Lilith also bears witness to a new and puzzling variation on Levi's tendency to view the camps,

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in his own words, "as a distorted mirror of the present-day world." In the last story of the book (in its author's estimation, the most important) he describes the life and career of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the Nazi-installed Eldest of the Jews who turned the Lodz ghetto into a miniature kingdom, printing his own currency and postage stamps, commissioning poems in his own praise, organizing an army of workers ten thousand strong, and, finally, negotiating with the Germans over the transportation of Jews to concentration camps.

Rumkowski's career is hardly unknown: it has been the subject of much scholarly attention, it has offered occasion for at least one novel (Leslie Epstein's *King of the Jews*), and most recently it has been brought to our attention once more in Lucjan Dobroszycki's masterful edition of *The Chronicles of the Lodz Ghetto*. Levi has nothing new to add to the lamentable story. Instead, his half-whimsical, half-solemn retelling of it deliberately deflects its historical particularity, urging an "allegorical" view of Rumkowski as an emblem of a universal human potentiality. In Levi's reading, this former orphanage director and bankrupt who was dismissed from the Zionist party for insubordination before he rose to power under the Nazis was no sport brought to prominence by the unnatural circumstances of ghetto life but rather a kind of everyman, whose bizarre and sorrowful career serves as "a metaphor for our civilization":

> We are all mirrored in Rumkowski, his ambiguity is ours, that of hybrids molded of clay and spirit; his fever is ours, that of our Western civilization which "descends to hell with trumpets and drums," and its miserable tinsel is the distorted image of our symbols of social prestige. . . . Like Rumkowski, we too are so dazzled by power and money as to forget our essential fragility, forget that all of us are in the ghetto, that the ghetto is enclosed, that beyond the enclosure wait the lords of death and that close by the train is waiting.

This statement, with its muddled sentimentality, its descent into educated cliché, and its note of hauteur disguised as an almost maudlin self-incrimination (somehow, one does not believe Levi means to include himself in the "we" under indictment here), sits startlingly at odds with the modesty, the rationality, the faith in human will, and above all the bent for exact discrimination which illuminate Levi's finest writing.

Levi's latest book, *If Not Now, When?*, based on a year's research into "Yiddish civilization," completes his immersion into what he calls "the moonstruck world of Ashkenazic Jewry." The novel—his first to appear in English—was prompted by the controversy over the nature and extent of Jewish resistance to Nazism, and describes a Jewish partisan band fighting the German army at the end of World War II.

If Not Now, When? chronicles the struggles of this group on its trek across Eastern Europe to Italy. The action is seen through the eyes of Mendl, a village watch-mender and Red Army straggler, who joins the band and takes part in its clashes with unfriendly Russian and Polish partisan groups in the forests and in acts of sabotage: diverting German parachutists, dynamiting train tracks, sniping at a shooting party of German officers on a nobleman's estate, commandeering a locomotive, even liberating a concentration camp. At the novel's conclusion the bedraggled survivors are lionized in Italian Jewish drawing rooms as they wait to board ship for the Holy Land.

Though outwardly an adventure story, *If Not Now, When?*, like Levi's earlier work, is a quiet and rather private tale. Even so explosive an event as the concentration-camp liberation is curiously muted. The freed inmates, colorless shrouds whose stories are never told, are too weak to join the fray and simply drop from sight, leaving the Jewish partisans quarrelsome and depressed, and the deed of liberation—with the terrible knowledge which accompanies it—vanishes from the book as if it had never been.

In place of driving action, *If Not Now, When?* concentrates instead upon the band's inner dynamics—on the contrasts between the tormenting doubts and scruples of Mendl, a worrier afflicted with an ability to see his enemy's side of the question, and the ruthless certainties of Line, a waif-like feminist-Zionist-Communist named after the English suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst; and on the carefree volatility of the band's leader Gedaleh, a violinist gifted with "the logic and bold imagination of the Talmudists, the sensitivity of musicians and children, the comic power of strolling players, and the vitality absorbed from the Russian earth."

Levi intends the group to be a microcosm, comprising "all the nuances which can be found between Jewish nationalism, Marxist orthodoxy, religious orthodoxy, anarchist egalitarianism, and Tolstoyan return to the earth," and united only in the determination to "survive, do the maximum damage to the Germans, and go to Palestine" where they will build a world without money and without landowners, where "everybody does what work he can, and is given what he needs."

If this sounds dangerously close to the stuff of propaganda, the impression is not dispelled by the central irony which provides much of the novel's humor: the spectacle of guns in the hands of children of tailors and rabbis. The actor Pavel, drawing on "the endless supply of Jewish self-mockery," tells the story of yeshiva students in the czar's infantry who, though crack shots at target practice, refuse to fire in battle, astonished that the enemy is no longer cardboard but "men, like us. If we shoot, we might hurt them." The Jewish partisans hold long debates over the sinfulness of taking human life, finally deriving solace from the biblical precedent of Samson (surely, in

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the light of that unlucky hero's eventual fate, an ambiguous model for Zionists).

Much of this self-consciousness could be forgiven if Levi's novel succeeded on artistic grounds. Unfortunately, although he has chosen a most engrossing and important subject, *If Not Now, When?* must be judged a failure. The plot is at once stiffly schematic (the book finishes on August 7, 1945 with "the ambiguous double omen" of the birth of a baby to two members of the band and the news of the dropping of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima the day before) and unsettlingly random (a major protagonist, Leonid, drops from the picture midway, and is eventually killed after hinting that Gedaleh is an NKVD agent, a charge which is neither denied nor substantiated). Levi's men and women are wooden logs whose mental qualities, backgrounds, motives, and convictions are never shown to us but rather set forth in the leaden exposition which serves for conversation in this novel. In the absence of dynamic action or persuasive human types, Levi resorts to staged ideological confrontations, with the characters stating in turn their political philosophies and debating on set topics as they sit around the campfire in the woods of wartime Byelorussia.

Levi must be admired for his bravery in tackling this immensely ambitious task, a work of fiction portraying the deeds of fighters steeped in a tradition which he could only approximate through painstaking research. Yet for all his hard work and good will, the distance between Turin and the forests of Eastern Europe proves too far to be bridged by so fastidious and uncertain an imagination as his. *If Not Now, When?* forfeits the accuracy of historical accounts while never grasping those qualities of human reality that fiction promises and at its best succeeds in conveying.

PRIMO LEVI's place in 20th-century letters is a peculiar one. He is a consummately gentlemanly writer, a watcher from the sidelines who has made himself master of a literary manner light, subtle, elliptical, curiously ascetic, and rather patrician, a manner which relies for its effects on understatement and irony but which paradoxically found its true complement in an experience utterly blunt and overwhelming in its horror.

Levi's first book, *If This Is a Man*, written when he was only twenty-eight, remains, almost forty years after its composition and for all its faults of omission, one of the finest literary works of its kind, a book whose low clear tones long echo in the reader's imagination. Its companion piece, *The Truce*, though weaker, still retains something of the tautness and resonance of its predecessor. And in such later works as *The Periodic Table* Levi demonstrates a talent for witty speculation and piquant vignettes, a love of the colorful and quirky, a taste for subtle discrimination and sweetly-scented reminiscences that fully justify his reputation as a literary master, albeit in a minor key.

Yet for all their grace, intelligence, and often poetical qualities of expression, the memoirs, novels, and short stories of Levi's middle age suffer from a certain inhibiting fastidiousness and insubstantiality, an inertia which stems perhaps from snobbery or timidity, perhaps from lack of conviction. Describing his ancestors in the opening story of *The Periodic Table*, Levi could be describing his own later books: "Though quite various, [they] have in common a touch of the static, an attitude of dignified abstention, of voluntary (or accepted) relegation to the margins of the great river of life."

Levi's finest work, a civilized man's record of the ultimate barbarity, recalls that of the poets of late Latin antiquity, the last fruits of a rich and eloquent culture, living on the edge of an "endless night." The classical scholar Helen Waddell writes of Ausonius, a 4th-century poet, consul, and memoirist, who after a full career settled on his estate in Bordeaux to grow Paestum roses, work on his memoirs of the provincial grand bourgeoisie, and compose poetry dallying in "anagram and compliment, enamelled fragments of philosophy, the fading of roses, the flavor of oysters." Levi is such an Ausonius, one who lived to see and tell of the Sack of Rome and who was, if alas only momentarily, endowed by the sight with a strange power of speech.

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What Nairobi Wrought

Michael Levin

BETWEEN July 10 and July 26 of this year, several thousand delegates from 159 countries convened in Nairobi, Kenya, for what was widely hailed as a meeting of the world's women. This world conference was mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations to "Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women." The UN Decade for Women had begun in 1975 with a conference in Mexico City, which issued a World Plan of Action to "promote equality between men and women, to ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, and to increase women's contribution to the strengthening of world peace"; it was punctuated in 1980 by a "mid-decade" conference in Copenhagen, which produced a Program of Action to sharpen the plan. Nairobi was to cap this effort with "Forward-Looking Strategies of Implementation for the Advancement of Women" with respect to "Equality, Development, and Peace" up to the year 2000.

While the popular media tended to accept at face value the conference's grandiose description of itself, a number of commentators, for the most part not actually writing from Nairobi and in many cases writing before the conference had actually ended, were less sanguine. Such Saturday-night quarterbacking was perhaps understandable in light of the precedents set by Mexico City and Copenhagen, retrospectively termed "disasters" and "fiascos" even by a number of their Western participants. These conferences had been given over almost entirely to polemicizing against the United States and Israel, with nominally "women's issues" relegated to the closing hours. The U.S. had been unable to vote for either the 1975 plan or the 1980 program, both of which specifically identified Zionism as a form of racism, and there was little reason to anticipate better from Nairobi. Despite the U.S. delegation's strongly expressed hope for "consensus," it was widely expected that the conference would collapse as regional animosities—concerning apartheid, Iran and Iraq, Israel and the Arab world, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, the Western Sahara, and Central America—would displace women's affairs and make a mockery of the claim that women could cooperate where men could not.

All such predictions misdefined what was at stake in Nairobi. As it turned out, there was indeed much sectarian bickering, but what are conventionally called "women's issues" were also addressed at length. Strenuous last-minute negotiating, moreover, did produce a document free of overt reference to Zionism, and deemed worthy of approval by the Western bloc.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to consider the Nairobi conference a success, or a significant event for the vast majority of the world's women, or proof that women in power can resolve conflicts more effectively than men. Least of all does it follow that the UN is becoming a place in which democracies can feel comfortable. Those parts of the Forward-Looking Strategies not embodying radical nostrums of every sort, relevant or irrelevant to women, constitute—as the Washington *Post* correctly (and approvingly) noted—a "feminist wish list," but as the *Post* did not note, it is a list at variance with the traditions of liberal democracy. Nor did the willingness of the nonaligned and Soviet blocs to compromise on language critical of Israel mark an underlying lessening of hostility. If anything, Nairobi suggests that the UN is drifting further into a world of make-believe, with the Western democracies surprisingly willing to follow.

II

IT IS important to bear in mind that in fact two conferences took place concurrently in Nairobi. The world conference *per se* was held between July 15 and July 26 at the impressive Kenyatta International Conference Center, which easily accommodated 2,500 delegates, 78 "members of national-liberation movements," and 1,400 journalists. About a mile away, on the campus of the University of Nairobi, ran Forum '85, organized by several hundred nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), including the International Planned Parenthood Foundation, the SWAPO Women's Committee, Women's Studies International, the International Prostitutes Collective, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Arab Women's Organization of Jordan, and the Democratic Front for Peace Teach-

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ers. In all, 13,000 NGO delegates participated in 1,100 forum workshops between July 10 and July 19.

Although the forum was not officially sponsored by the UN, the two conferences were closely linked. The UN Secretary-General had officially invited the NGO's to make submissions to the UN when the world conference was in preparation. The NGO's received the same UN questionnaire as the member states, and their replies were taken to "validate the aims of the World Plan of Action"—no doubt because on such matters as comparable worth, "technology transfers from developed to developing countries," "advocacy of a new international economic order," "the prevention of the arms race in outer space and the organization of a nuclear freeze," and sanctions against South Africa, NGO opinions were indistinguishable from those of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.* The UN also provided the forum with documentation and the use of facilities. Their interaction was epitomized by the daily briefings held by the official U.S. conference delegation for the American NGO contingent (which numbered about 2,000). Most significantly, the forum provided the conference with its ideological sustenance.

The legitimacy conferred on the forum by the UN, which at the same time left its participants unrestrained by diplomatic niceties, seemed to intensify the main message of the forum: that South Africa, Israel, the United States, and men are among them the cause of all the world's misery. Something of the general drift could be gleaned from the title of a paper given in a workshop on "Education and the Pan-African Mind." This title read: "Western Education Produces Minds that Design Nuclear Wars: Destroy the Myth of Western Education." A crowded, tumultuous session on "Women's Education for Policy Change Toward Peace and Development" more precisely traced the capitalistic war system to "the 4 P's: Patriarchy, Power, Privilege, and Profit." Here it was explained that women produce cannon fodder (i.e., children) and sexually service male combatants; that domestic violence represents practice for wartime violence against women; that some nations (unnamed) arouse their troops with pornographic pictures of women in countries to be invaded; and that instead of foolishly "buying into reformist possibilities" like unilateral disarmament, women may have to take such radical steps as the creation of a Women's Navy to redistribute resources. For a fuller understanding, the audience was referred to the film *America: From Hitler to M-X*.

These attacks on the U.S. were frequently led by Americans. One session, on "Discrimination and War," was presented by a Japanese group, but an American woman ran the meeting and narrated its slide show, which concerned Hiroshima and which featured highly emotive drawings and photographs with the predictable subtheme of American racism as the sole motive for use of the atomic bomb (no mention was made of Pearl Harbor or Bataan). In an attempt at evenhandedness, the show's preparers had included one drawing of the torture-murder of American POW's after the bombing, but the American narrator interjected that such a response was understandable and justified. She concluded by yoking Auschwitz and Hiroshima as "two manifestations of the same theme," and by expressing resentment at the alleged greater retention of the Holocaust in historical memory.

On the whole, the anti-Americanism of the forum consisted less in the leveling of wild charges than in the unquestioning acceptance of the truth of such charges as the common coin of discourse. Thus, after ritually lamenting America's misuse of its power, one famous American feminist, Betty Friedan, in a workshop she was chairing on "Feminism and Pluralism," went on to compare certain unnamed American "religious fundamentalists" with the Ayatollah Khomeini and, not long after, with Adolf Hitler. It gradually emerged that these monsters, by opposing abortion, threatened something called "pluralism." Miss Friedan then invited members of her audience to share their pluralistic experience of feminism. The first speaker, a Nicaraguan, shouted for ten minutes about *contra* bases in Honduras, and a young Brazilian woman harangued the gathering on the subject of Brazil's external debt.

The "peace tent" set up at the forum was especially revealing. It contained a great many pamphlets and petitions urging an immediate end to American "Star Wars" research, but nothing about the Soviet Union (which, it was maintained, is not working on space-based defense systems). A speaker from the African National Congress (ANC) told an enthusiastic tent meeting that "I have to fight, I have to bleed" to free South Africa. And there were posters displayed of women from another revolutionary African group, SWAPO, carrying machine guns. Did this then mean that fighting was justified in some cases? Yes, according to one peace-tent official, in "emergency situations like neocolonialism in El Salvador by North America, which women are fighting." The well-known American radical activist Cora Weiss, another tent presence, refused to answer questions about this selective eschewal of violence, insisting that women were allowed to put up anything in this "open space." To her credit, a tent sponsor from the American Friends Service Committee seemed genuinely perturbed by the poster and tried to take it down, but was prevented from doing so by Sissy Farenthold, yet another ostensible antiwar activist officiating in the tent. (The real issue, according to Miss Farenthold, was SWAPO's freedom of speech.)

* See "The Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations in the United Nations Decade for Women," UN Doc. A/ CONF. 116/14.

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BUT if any strand ran through the entire forum, and indeed gave it unity, it was hatred of Israel. In a workshop on "Women Against Nuclear War" it was maintained with syllogistic certainty that development requires peace, peace is thwarted by arms expenditures, arms expenditures are sustained by "imperial aggressivity," which in turn is manifested by support for Israel against the PLO and for Israel's "destruction of Lebanon." Next door, the General Federation of Jordanian Women and the Women's Society for the Struggle Against Illiteracy decried the fact that Jordanian women's love of peace was threatened by "subversion by conspiracies and Israeli occupation." Peace—and, evidently, literacy—were said to require the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. Under the least expected rubrics one would hear denunciations of "the Jewization [*sic*] of the West Bank." Peace-tent speakers on "Women Under Apartheid" also drew thunderous applause for exposing "terrorism waged by the Zionist state of Israel and the U.S. against Grenada," and women (including women from Israel and the U.S.) joined in comparing Menachem Begin to Adolf Hitler and Sabra and Shatila (as attacked by Lebanese Christians during the Israeli occupation of Beirut, not as attacked by Shiite Muslims after the Israeli withdrawal) to Auschwitz.

Needless to say, the large PLO delegation, at least two of whose members were known to be convicted terrorists, regularly shouted down those Israeli women who attempted to speak in defense of their country. The PLO delegation consulted closely with women from the Soviet Union about when to close down meetings, and attempted to show a film considered so inflammatory by the Kenyan government (which sought above all to avoid embarrassing incidents) that it was seized at customs. Even members of the very dovish Israeli group Peace Now were sent into a self-described "state of shock" by the intensity of the PLO's hatred.

More surprising, however, was the upbeat reaction of the official Israeli delegation to this PLO harassment at the forum, and to the noisy walkout staged by the Arab and Soviet blocs during Israel's presentation to a plenary session of the conference. Sarah Doron, the head of the delegation, insisted that the real significance of the walkout was that a few Jordanian women had remained seated. When asked whether, in light of the relentlessly anti-Israeli tone of the forum and conference, Israel should be contributing to such functions, another Israeli delegate replied that both conferences were worth "a hundred thousand times what they cost, because they allowed feminists from all over the world to get together." No member of the Israeli delegation seemed to notice any connection between the general leftward drift of radical feminism and hostility to Israel.

The ideas repeated so monotonously at the forum may well be too bizarre to be taken seriously in their own right. (For what it is worth, the workshops dealing with once popular feminist topics like unisex education and bias-spotting were relatively poorly attended.) Still, the forum could not be dismissed as a gathering of revolutionary crazies. It cost a lot of money to bring 13,000 radical feminists all the way to Africa, and the forum was financed from quite prestigious sources. The Ford Foundation contributed $640,000. Apple donated 150 personal computers. Other contributors included the Skaggs Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, the National Council of Churches, and the World Council of Churches. The WCC also contributed the personnel who convened all the workshops dealing with "refugees," and so may be regarded as in some part responsible for the warm welcome accorded the PLO. The Kenyan government provided the forum with $250,000 in translation facilities. More disturbing, financial support was given to implacably anti-Western NGO delegations by the governments of Canada, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Australia, and England. The forum thus enjoyed lavish funding, wore the mantle of the UN, and, what is most significant, articulated the theories being applied at the official conference.

III

ALTHOUGH the more important events were to be expected not at the forum but at the world conference, very little actually happened there until the final hours. Preparatory meetings had produced a preliminary version of the Forward-Looking Strategies, most of which already commanded unanimous assent. What remained to deal with were 75 controversial paragraphs about such heterogeneous topics as apartheid, Palestinians, the new international economic order, peace education, disarmament, and comparable worth. The Soviet bloc and the Group of 77 supposedly nonaligned nations wanted these items included; the American delegation, led by Maureen Reagan, the President's daughter, made it clear that, above all, it would have nothing to do with any document condemning Zionism. The U.S. had also wanted to avoid the topic of apartheid, as being irrelevant to women, but relented on condition that any mention of apartheid concern its distinctive impact on women. (The U.S. delegation did not, however, insist on discussing the distinctive impact on women of Nicaraguan support for leftist guerrillas in El Salvador, of yellow rain, or of other such equally appropriate or inappropriate items.)

Roughly speaking, the first half of the conference was devoted to specifically feminist concerns, the second half to the wider controversies, and it was the question of whether the latter would be resolved that provided the conference its measure of suspense. The Group of 77 and the Soviets wanted the final document to contain a denunciation of "coercive measures" adopted by

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"certain developed states" toward "developing countries"; support of the "Mexican Declaration of 1975" (which condemns Zionism); and, needless to say, explicit inclusion of Zionism as one of the "major obstacles to the advancement of women."

The first impasse was broken late in the afternoon of the last day when the Western bloc agreed to approve the "coercive measures" paragraph so long as it was accompanied by a footnote stating "reservations." The U.S. then abstained on the "Mexican Declaration" paragraph, again indicating its reasons in a footnote. Finally, at 4 A.M. on the morning of July 27, it was agreed that the phrase "apartheid and Zionism" in a list of the obstacles to women would be replaced by "apartheid and all other forms of racism." The U.S. could accept this language because Zionism had not been explicitly mentioned, while the Soviet bloc and the Group of 77 could claim victory because the UN had elsewhere explicitly stipulated that Zionism is "a form of racism."

THIS unanimity inspired *Time* magazine to herald, in a headline, "The Triumphant Spirit of Nairobi." "In the end," *Time* concluded, "the United Nations Decade for Women avoids extremes." Before rushing to such an assessment, however, it would be well to examine the documents that prompted the unanimity, and especially those little-publicized portions of them *not* dealing with the sins of the West.

There was, first, a marked hostility to the family as traditionally conceived. According to a UN document entitled "The State of the World's Women 1985," "women's domestic role is at the heart of the problem," whether the "problem" is the failure to earn the same amount as men, the failure to benefit from agricultural innovations, or the failure to "achieve top administrative positions." A publication distributed by West Germany concurred: "The same obstacles that stand in the way of a professional career usually hold true for a political career, i.e., household and family."

The issues created by the family, one document stated, cannot be solved by "legal equality and eliminating discrimination," for the main obstacle is "the deeply rooted traditional sociocultural value system and the associated perception of the status and role of women in society." According to the Forward-Looking Strategies, the belief that there is any biological basis whatsoever to the distribution of sex roles—a belief which happens to be held by the overwhelming majority of behavioral scientists—is false and pernicious:

> One of the fundamental obstacles to women's equality [are the] larger social, economic, political, and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences. Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women . . . the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality.

Delegates at the conference tended to be complete environmental determinists. Maureen Reagan declared several times that boys and girls differ only because of parental expectations. Mizza Shapira, an Israeli delegate who throughout the conference pressed anti-"stereotyping" language with special vehemence, argued that the presence in the Israeli army of female generals who had children proved that there were no statistically significant sex differences.

Certain practical recommendations followed. Primary was the demand for government coercion to make people forget what their senses tell them. In the words of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, whose ratification by all nations was listed as a major Forward-Looking Strategy:

> States Parties undertake to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices which constitute discrimination against women [and] to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.

Next came preferential quotas. As explained by the *Bureau International du Travail*:

> Female workers have the right to equality of opportunity and treatment with men. All forms of discrimination based on sex . . . must be abolished. Special positive treatment during a transitional period, looking toward effective equality between the sexes, will not be considered discriminatory.

These quotas were to extend to appointive and elective public office. Indeed, the Forward-Looking Strategies demanded that governments use "legislative measures" to "secure the equitable representation of women at a national, state, and local level." This carried forward the recommendation of the Council of Europe that "coercive measures" be used to "impose women" on parliamentary bodies, along with "propaganda campaigns to alert all voters to the need for women to play a part in the management of public affairs." (UN documents on this subject frequently compare the democracies unfavorably to socialist and Communist governments, which supposedly have more women "representatives" in them.)

One may wonder why the United States should in any way associate itself with these anti-democratic measures, which at their most ambitious would extend government control over every aspect of private life (for what is not a "custom" or "practice"?). The American delegation did enter a reservation disagreeing with comparable worth, but it was enthusiastic about provisions which raised the sharpest questions of civil liberty. Thus, though it balked at a call for "censorship boards" to oversee the "continuing improvement in the portrayal of women in the mass media," it accepted

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the idea once "censorship boards" was changed to "review bodies," and it otherwise had no problem with "high-priority" quotas for women "at all levels of communications policy and decision-making."

The American delegation also agreed that the "cultural media involving ritual drama, dialogue, oral literature, and music, should be integrated in all development efforts." When asked if such language was consistent with the First Amendment, especially in the light of Supreme Court rulings that see an impermissible "chilling effect" in government endorsement, however indirect, of any specific form of expression, Maureen Reagan replied that she was not an expert on the Constitution. Miss Reagan also actively defended the demand that "The curricula of public and private schools should be examined, textbooks and other educational materials reviewed, and educational personnel retrained to eliminate all discriminatory gender stereotyping in education" by citing a California textbook in which pioneer men were described as taking along "their horses and their women."

In short, the documents which came out of the Nairobi conference must be viewed against the background of the radical feminist agenda. For it is only against that backdrop that one can see why those sections of the final document nominally dealing with "women" had little real relation to justice for the world's women, and offered little promise of improving their lot. The Forward-Looking Strategies, for example, were quite mute on the mistreatment of women common in the Muslim world. Although the conference endorsed in words the need for economic development, it drew a spurious opposition between development for men and development for women. Even genuine women's issues were seen through radical eyes: breast-feeding was encouraged, but " government must harmonize lactating and working responsibilities." Thus did the conference in Nairobi enact its "triumphant spirit."

IV

Was the conference at least a triumph in showing that women could achieve the reconciliation of differences that had long eluded men? Although the willingness of the Soviet and Arab blocs to drop the reference to Zionism has been adduced as evidence of such success, in fact it can be interpreted to mean something entirely different. Dictatorships—and most of the member states of the UN are dictatorships—do not view agreements as democracies do. They feel little compelling need to honor what they sign, and their populaces are unlikely to pressure them to live up to agreements. China can sign the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination, which declares a "right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of children," and still force Chinese women to have abortions. The Forward-Looking Strategies can be ratified by polygamous Kenyans. For dictatorships, the significance of UN treaties, which are anyway unenforceable, lies mainly if not entirely in their external public-relations value.

It is different in the West, where commitments are taken seriously, where governments are based on principles, not whims, and where government actions are scrutinized by a large opinion-making segment of the population. Western governments too have been known to sign documents simply because they sound good, but if what is signed contains uncomfortable provisions, those interested in seeing such provisions acted on can cause a great deal of fuss and embarrassment. "Covenants, without the sword, are but words," wrote Hobbes, not realizing the potency of words in a liberal democracy.

Thus, securing America's signature on a foolish document has much to recommend it—to those who bear us no good will. If we take the document seriously we stand to compromise our social and political institutions. If, as is more likely, we attempt to ignore it, our dereliction can be invoked publicly by those who aim to see these institutions weakened. Already at a press conference in Nairobi, a hostile journalist asked Miss Reagan if signing the strategies document would commit her father's administration to cutting defense spending and increasing social spending. When she said that it would not, and that in fact it would change no administration policy whatsoever, another journalist asked her what was then the point of signing the document. A good, if nasty, question. Just to have it asked, however, and to have the resultant embarrassment on record, might well have been worth a spurious show of "compromise" by the dictatorships.

V

Many people appalled by the excesses and fatuities of the UN are reluctant to draw the consequences of their dismay. Instead they urge the U.S. to take the UN more seriously, to field a strong UN team, to make our case more eloquently. They may well think that Nairobi, where the U.S. team was as intellectually strong as one could wish, demonstrated that such steps can be successfully implemented. This would be a complete misreading, or more precisely a complete failure to read, the document we carried away.

It is often said that the United States cannot leave the UN without incurring the charge that it has thereby singlehandedly destroyed the great ideals that led to the UN's creation. But the UN as it actually exists has so traduced those ideals that our continued allegiance to it does more to dishonor than to perpetuate them. Nairobi, for which American taxpayers paid a quarter of the cost, is only the latest manifestation of the ongoing betrayal.

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Who Killed the CIA?

The Confessions of Stansfield Turner

Edward Jay Epstein

ADMIRAL Stansfield Turner commanded a destroyer, a guided-missile cruiser, a carrier task force, a fleet, and the prestigious Naval War College before he was shunted away to a NATO post in Italy in 1975. When he was abruptly summoned back to Washington in February 1977 by his former classmate at Annapolis, President Jimmy Carter, he expected to be appointed to a high naval position or to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Instead, the new President asked him to be Director of Central Intelligence (DCI).

Although Turner had had little previous experience in intelligence, he viewed it simply as a problem of assessing data, or, as he described it to his son, nothing more than "bean counting." Accepting the position of "chief bean counter," he assumed that he could bring the CIA, and American intelligence, to the same standard of operational efficiency he had brought the ships under his command. The four-year effort to achieve this goal is the subject of his book, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition*.[1]

He quickly found, however, that the CIA was a far more complex and elusive entity than he had expected. To begin with, the acting CIA Director, Henry Knoche, rather than behaving like a ship's "executive officer," surprised Turner by refusing his "captain's" first order: a request that Knoche accompany him to meetings with congressional leaders. As far as Turner was concerned, this was insubordination (and Knoche's days were numbered). When he met with other senior executives of the CIA at a series of dinners, he found "a disturbing lack of specificity and clarity" in their answers. On the other hand, he found the written CIA reports presented to him "too long and detailed to be useful." He notes that "my first encounters with the CIA did not convey either the feeling of a warm welcome or a sense of great competence"—an assessment that led to the retirement of many of these senior officers.

Turner was further frustrated by the system of secrecy that kept vital intelligence hermetically contained in bureaucratic "compartments" within the CIA. Not only did he view such secrecy as irrational, he began to suspect that it cloaked a wide range of unethical activities. He became especially concerned with abuses in the espionage division, which he discovered was heavily overstaffed with case officers—some of whom, on the pretext of seeing agents abroad, were disbursing large sums in "expenses" to themselves, keeping mistresses, and doing business with international arms dealers. Aside from such petty corruption, Turner feared that these compartmentalized espionage operations could enmesh the entire CIA in a devastating scandal. The potential for such a "disgrace," as he puts it, was made manifest to him by a single traumatic case that occurred in the 1960's—one which he harks back to throughout his book, and which he uses to justify eliminating the essential core of the CIA's espionage service.

The villain of this case, as Turner describes it, is James Jesus Angleton, who was chief of the CIA's counterintelligence staff from 1954 to 1974; the victim was Yuri Nosenko, a KGB officer who began collaborating with the CIA in 1962 and then defected to the United States in 1964, and who claimed to have read all the KGB files on Lee Harvey Oswald. The crime was the imprisonment of Nosenko, which, according to Turner, was "a travesty of the rights of the individual under the law." It all began in 1964, after Nosenko arrived in the United States. Turner states that Angleton "decided that Nosenko was a double agent, and set out to force him to confess. . . . When he would not give in to normal interrogation, Angleton's team set out to break the man psychologically. A small prison was built, expressly for him."

Nosenko was kept in this prison for three-and-one-half years, although he never admitted to being a double agent. He was then released and sub-

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[1] Houghton Mifflin, 304 pp., $16.95.

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sequently put on the CIA payroll as a consultant.

After reviewing the conditions of his solitary confinement, Turner concluded scathingly that "the way Angleton treated Nosenko . . . was a case of stooping to the kind of behavior we expect from the Soviets and other totalitarian societies." He blamed it all on "compartmentalization" within the CIA. "I found it difficult to believe, for instance, that DCI Dick Helms knew what was being done to Nosenko. . . . I could see that Angleton had manipulated the system by constructing elaborate barriers around sensitive information."

THE problem with the story Turner tells is that it is untrue. Angleton did not order the arrest, incarceration, or hostile interrogation of Nosenko. Nor did he, or his counterintelligence staff, ever have jurisdiction over the case. The Nosenko case, from its inception in June 1962 until August 1967, was the exclusive responsibility of the Soviet Russia Division—the largest and most powerful unit of the CIA, which was responsible for all espionage operations against the Soviet Union. The precise sequence of events was unambiguously set forth in congressional testimony, which is also the source that Turner cites for his version.[2]

The full responsibility for imprisoning and attempting to break Nosenko was acknowledged by David Murphy, the chief of the Soviet Russia Division. His concern was that Nosenko might redefect as part of "a massive propaganda assault on the CIA."[3] After his deputy, Tennant Bagley, established that Nosenko had fabricated his rank and status in the KGB, and was lying on numerous other matters of concern to the CIA, including the KGB's relationship with Lee Harvey Oswald, Murphy decided to subject Nosenko to hostile interrogation. This meant he would be arrested and treated as an enemy intelligence officer. Murphy sought, and received, authorization to incarcerate Nosenko from Richard Helms, the future DCI, who then headed the clandestine side of the CIA. Helms testified that he only reluctantly gave this authorization because of the extraordinary circumstances of the case. He explained that Nosenko's reliability was the "key to the Warren Commission's determination of whether or not Oswald killed President Kennedy on instructions from the Soviet Union."

Angleton, to be sure, had believed from the outset in 1962 that the information Nosenko had offered was disinformation designed to mislead the CIA. Such judgments, right or wrong, were an integral part of his job of providing an overall picture of KGB strategy. He did not, however, recommend imprisonment or hostile interrogation. He was not even consulted by Murphy on the decision. When Bagley was asked directly about Angleton's relation to the Soviet Russia Division, he testified: "They are entirely separate. Mr. Angleton's counterintelligence staff had a staff role as against an operational or executive role. . . . We would run the cases, handle the defectors."[4]

Nor did Angleton have anything to do with the conditions of the incarceration. Nosenko's prison was designed and built by the Office of Security. His diet and treatment, also under the auspices of the Office of Security, were supposed to be the equivalent of those afforded to Frederick Barghoorn, an American professor who had been arrested and detained in Moscow.[5]

Finally, Nosenko's treatment was hardly kept secret from Helms by Angleton, as Turner suggests, or by anyone else. Helms, as both he and Bagley testified, was kept informed by the Soviet Russia Division about the progress of the case, which Helms explained hung "like an incubus" over the CIA. Helms, concerned about the legal ramifications of the unprecedented incarceration of a defector, brought the problem to the attention of Lawrence Houston, the CIA's general counsel, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, the Deputy Attorney General of the United States, and William Foley of the Department of Justice.[6] Nor was the case hidden in the recesses of the CIA: the Rockefeller Commission, which also investigated it, concluded: "[Nosenko's] confinement was approved by the Director of Central Intelligence; and the FBI, Attorney General, United States Intelligence Board, and selected members of Congress were aware to some extent of the confinement."[7]

Admiral Turner of course knew all these facts, and reviews them in the congressional testimony he cites in his book. He certainly has every right to disagree about the way this controversial case was handled (and, ironically, Angleton would probably agree with him), but by falsifying its history he shows himself far more adept as a bureaucratic politician than as a historian. If he had vilified those actually responsible for the incarceration of Nosenko, namely, the Soviet Russia Division, the Office of Security, and the top leadership of the CIA—the collective heart of the espionage organization—and accused them of being no better than "the Soviets," his own judgment, and perspective, might well have been questioned. By instead laying the blame on Angleton, and postulating a phantom "empire" within the CIA which kept the "crime" secret from the rest of the CIA (and the Department of Justice), he plays to a ready constituency in the press and government to whom Angleton has become a *bête noire*.

Turner is not doing this out of any personal vin-

[2] Select Committee on Assassinations, U.S. House of Representatives, 95th Congress, Second Session, Investigation of the Assassination of President John F. Kennedy, Vols. II, IV, XII, September 1978, March 1979.

[3] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 87.

[4] Ibid., Vol. XII, pp. 633-34.

[5] Ibid., Vol. II, p. 499.

[6] Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 26.

[7] Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States, Report to the President, Manor Books (1975), p. 32.

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dictiveness toward Angleton (whom he has never met, and who left the CIA in 1974); he is merely using his name as a tactful metaphor for those in the intelligence establishment he prefers not to confront directly. When he writes about "Angletons incarcerating Nosenkos," he is really condemning a much broader spectrum of CIA activities. The point of this exercise is not to denigrate Angleton but to justify the radical cuts Turner made in the espionage branch itself.

In the summer of 1977, after setting in motion a plan to eliminate 820 positions in the espionage branch (and notifying the affected case officers by a computerized form letter), Turner reported to President Carter that "the espionage branch was [now] being run ethically and soundly." This was no doubt what the President wanted to hear from his Director of Central Intelligence. The problem was that ethical espionage is a contradiction in terms. There are of course forms of intelligence-gathering which violate no laws or ethical standards. For example, "national technical means," which includes satellite photography and electronic interception of data, is sanctioned by the United States and the Soviet Union in the SALT agreements; embassy attachés are permitted to report on what they observe; and defectors and travelers can be debriefed. But espionage, by definition, is illegal. It is the theft of secrets from a foreign state. It involves bribing, blackmailing, or otherwise persuading a foreign national, in contravention of the laws of his country, to supply secret material or to plant an eavesdropping device. In addition, it is almost invariably necessary to use false identities, lies, and other deceptions to hide the theft itself. The process of organizing lawbreaking, as well as deceit, may be justified on the grounds that it is necessary for the safety and survival of a state, or, as it is called, *raisons d'état*, but it can hardly be elevated to an ethical plane

Consider, for example, the espionage flap that confronted Turner early in his career at the CIA. In July 1977 a young Soviet diplomat, Anatoli Filiatov, whom the CIA had been grooming as a "mole" in the Foreign Ministry, was caught by the KGB in Moscow. Then his American case officer, who had diplomatic cover, was entrapped—and photographed—leaving espionage equipment, including lethal cyanide ampules, in a "dead drop" for the Soviet spy. After the American diplomat was expelled from Moscow, Soviet sources reported that a Soviet diplomat, who worked with Filiatov in the Foreign Ministry, was killed with a similar cyanide capsule, implying murder or suicide. In addition to losing an agent, and having a case officer exposed and implicated in a possible cyanide poisoning, the CIA had to assess whether it had been betrayed from within. Even though this disaster did not develop into a public scandal, Turner no doubt realized that activities such as these could not be easily converted into ethical espionage.

The new role Turner proposed for the espionage service was determining, through polling techniques, public-opinion trends in such countries as the Soviet Union, Iran, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and Argentina. As he explains: "The espionage branch is the ideal instrument . . . for uncovering such trends, even if doing so is almost an overt activity." Specifically, he suggested "using either undercover case officers or agents," with "the polling skill of George Gallup," to "take the pulse of a foreign country." The espionage branch, instead of illegally inducing enemy diplomats and intelligence officers to spy for the United States, would under such a scheme employ sociologists and anthropologists for this ethical, if somewhat academic, intelligence-gathering. He notes that there was strong resistance to this radical reform of his, explaining that it "was not considered espionage by the professionals." Nor would Stanfield's reform produce the enemy codes, plans, and other secret documents for which traditional espionage strives.

In any case, Turner offered his poll-taking idea only as a sop. His real design for the CIA involved effectively abolishing espionage, except as an ad-hoc supplement in certain prescribed circumstances, and replacing it with "technical collection," which is information gathered by electronic and image interceptors in satellites, ships in international waters, and other remotely-based platforms. This is a fully understandable preference: espionage, done by human agents who are vulnerable to arrest, is inherently dirty, unethical, unreliable, and potentially explosive; technical collection, performed by machines, is clean, legal, reliable, and invulnerable to scandal. Turner's thesis, which he argues lucidly, is that in recent years "the growth in technological methods of information-gathering," such as satellites and computers, has produced revolutionary gains for American intelligence which render traditional espionage all but unnecessary—except as a backstop for technical collection.

While this "revolution" has been going on since World War I, Turner is correct in asserting the paramountcy of technical collection today. It supplies the preponderance of intercepted data and reportedly accounts for well over 90 percent of the national intelligence budget. America's ability to suck in and "vacuum clean" data is superb: technical collection can detect enemy planes taking off, radar being switched on, missiles being fueled, and even tanks starting their engines. It can also, as Turner rightly points out, extrapolate from these data an enemy's intentions as well as his capacity for war.

All these marvels notwithstanding, technical collection remains a different form of intelligence-gathering from espionage. It essentially intercepts

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data that are allowed to leak into the international ether. These data remain available either because an enemy does not know they are leaking, which is usually a temporary situation, or because an enemy does not deem it worth the expense to protect them through encryption, camouflage, or deception. Most of what is intercepted by technical collection therefore is not secret—at least in the sense that the enemy knows it is being intercepted. And nations can protect truly sensitive data that can potentially be intercepted. If, for example, the Soviet Union does not want secret transmissions to be read by American intelligence, it encrypts them in a one-time computerized code, which cannot be broken without knowing the constantly changing cipher. The raw data of course are still intercepted by American antennas, but they cannot be deciphered. Similarly, if the Soviet Union wants to prevent an object from being photographed by an American satellite, whose paths are predictable, it hides or disguises it. The picture is still taken, but the object is not visible.

Whereas technical collection is based on the leakage from electronic transmissions and physical phenomena, espionage is predicated on human leakage: it seeks to compromise individuals with access to secrets. If successful, it not only forces the individuals illicitly to divulge secrets, but it keeps the enemy from knowing that his secret has been compromised. In doing so, it often provides the key which enables technical collection to be productive against secret information. For example, the breaking of the German Enigma coding machine in World War II, which is usually regarded as a triumph of technical collection, proceeded from an unsung espionage triumph. In 1931, French intelligence recruited as a spy a German clerk in the Reich Cipher Center named Hans-Thilo Schmidt. He provided the instruction manual and daily key settings for the Enigma machine over a two-month period. If these cryptography secrets had not been obtained, the German military codes generated by Enigma—though intercepted by the Allies—might never have been deciphered.

Espionage, since it is based on human vulnerability, can penetrate even the most heavily guarded repositories of national secrets. Soviet intelligence demonstrated this in the 1950's when it recruited no fewer than five different American sources in the ultra-secret National Security Agency (NSA), the unit that supplies the codes and ciphers used by the American government. One of these KGB spies, Jack E. Dunlap, the chauffeur for the NSA's Chief of Staff, organized a number of staff officers into a larceny scheme, which allowed him access to the highest level cryptography, the "keys to the kingdom," as one military investigator put it. He delivered this material to his Soviet case officer in the Chief of Staff's limousine (the only car which could leave headquarters without being searched). This human spying made it possible for the Soviet Union to decipher the American data that had been gathered by its technical collection, and also to ascertain many of the targets of American technical collection.

Espionage can also succeed over relatively long periods of time, since an agent, once enticed into illegally cooperating, can be blackmailed into continuing and recruiting others. The most recent example is the present Walker-Whitworth case. Here the KGB induced John Walker, a warrant officer in the U.S. Navy's submarine-operations room, to provide it, over a twenty-year period, with cryptographic key lists. These lists, together with naval encoding machines that the Soviet Union's North Korean ally had captured, allowed it to decipher submarine codes. Walker then recruited other family members and friends in the Navy to help him. This espionage enabled Soviet intelligence to decipher submarine transmissions and penetrate electronic deceptions which otherwise would have rendered useless whatever data its satellites, underwater sonar buoys, and other technical collection devices had picked up. As it turned out, the Navy, not realizing that its codes had been compromised, went right on using them for a decade.

IN EACH of these cases, espionage provided secrets that could not be garnered by even the most powerful machines of technical collection. But the distinction between these two modes of intelligence-gathering—espionage is unexpected theft from within the enemy's inner sanctum, technical collection is expected interception from outside—was not fully appreciated by Admiral Turner. He was determined to make the espionage branch a part of his technological "team"—although acknowledging that "it is never easy redirecting the thrust of an established, proud, and successful organization." By the time he left in 1981, he had not only drastically reduced the size and mission of the espionage branch —reassigning its case officers to such activities as poll-taking in friendly nations and servicing the scientific apparatus—but had radically revised the underlying assumptions on which intelligence was evaluated.

Up until Turner's reforms, for example, the CIA depended on a concept of disinformation in dealing with reports from Soviet espionage sources. Since Soviet officials recruited abroad by the CIA tended to be either intelligence officers, diplomats, or military attachés, the possibility had to be anticipated that some of them might report the contacts to Soviet security. If so, it was further assumed that these officials, known to be in contact with American intelligence, would be supplied with misleading messages—or "disinformation." In the CIA, disinformation meant private messages between adversary intelligence services that

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rarely, if ever, came to the attention of the media.[8]

Sifting this disinformation, which often turned out to be an impossible task, required fitting it into the entire mosaic of reports from the Soviet Union and its allies over an extended period of time. The task also implied some conspiratorial theory of how the KGB operated. Turner rejected this sort of inductive analysis, which he associated with the past "paranoia of the CIA's counterintelligence staff." Instead, Turner preferred to rely on more scientific methods, such as the testing of volunteer Soviet agents by polygraph machines and CIA psychologists. He even provided multimillion-dollar allocations from the intelligence budget for research on extra-sensory perception (ESP). All this allowed him to redefine disinformation, as he does in his book, as a threat to the public media—rather than as one to the CIA. After discounting much of Soviet disinformation as chimerical, he asserts: "Any disinformation campaign must pass through our own media. Because those media are inherently probing and skeptical, and because there are so many sources of media information in our society, we have built-in defenses."

By abnegating the CIA's responsibility for defending against disinformation, Turner automatically downgraded the role of counterintelligence. If misleading messages could be ferreted out through scientific technology by case officers, there was no need for a centralized staff to review the intelligence in a synoptic context—or to supply any sort of "institutional memory." The counterintelligence staff, already purged of most of its long-time staff officers by Turner's predecessor, William Colby, now lost its conceptual *raison d'être*. What remained of the counterintelligence function was relegated to police work. According to Turner's redefinition: "The job of counterintelligence is to find those Americans who do become agents of a foreign power." This greatly shrinks the bailiwick of counterintelligence, especially since the FBI, not the CIA, has jurisdiction in America for spy-catching (and the five spies he cites in his chapter on "Counterintelligence" were actually FBI cases).

Finally, Turner revised the concept of "operational security," which had, up to then, ruthlessly sealed off from any unnecessary risk data upon which foreign agents' lives depended. When, in 1978, a senior CIA officer—a station chief—came under suspicion after being identified by a CIA source in Soviet intelligence as a Soviet mole, Turner did not remove him from his position, even though he had access to highly secret data, or even place a warning in his file to restrict his access to future sensitive information. He explains: "That would have played it safe for the country but would have ruined the man's career without his knowing why."

Turner's presumption, which might have been laudable in any line of work other than secret intelligence, was that a staff officer had a right to retain his position until legally proved guilty. Turner therefore arranged a test for the suspected station chief in which he would be given secret material and placed under surveillance to see if he passed it to the Soviets. To Turner's great relief, the suspect did not contact the Soviets while under surveillance. While this non-event might have been explained in any number of ways—for example, he, or his Soviet contact, might have been warned or have detected the surveillance—Turner concluded: "I decided our entrapment effort had been sufficiently well-executed for me to rest my suspicions. I then ordered that no record of our suspicions and the ensuing investigation be put in the man's personnel record." While Turner's new concept of "security" protected the civil rights and career tenure of CIA officers, it left espionage agents, like Filiatov, who was compromised and sentenced to death, out in the cold.

THE new CIA undoubtedly provided its staff officers with a more efficient, ethical, and happier work environment. Turner, appreciating the need for a captain to know the "attitudes and morale . . . on his ship," held regular group discussions with "middle-management people like espionage officers at mid-career, secretaries, analysts at the desk level, minorities, and the handicapped." By this time, however, under Admiral Turner's command, the "ship" was something other than a secret intelligence organization.

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[8] Turner's own Deputy Director for Operations, John McMahon, testified that " 'disinformation' . . . almost never receives public attention." CIA Study: Soviet Covert Action and Propaganda, Presented to the Oversight Committee, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, February 1980.

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Israel's Standing in American Public Opinion

Mitchell Bard

In June of this year, Arab terrorists hijacked a TWA jet on a flight from Athens and held its American passengers hostage for more than two weeks, demanding that Israel release over 700 Lebanese imprisoned in a detention camp. The terrorists tried to create the impression that Israel was responsible for the fate of the Americans, and in this effort they were aided by some of their captives who told television audiences that Israel's prisoners were also hostages.

It was widely reported that the American public had accepted this interpretation, and had even begun to abandon its long-time support for Israel. Thus, although in the first week after the hijacking a majority of Americans disagreed with the statement, put to them in two Washington *Post*/ABC polls, that "The United States should reduce its ties to Israel in order to reduce the acts of terrorism against us," by the second week, with the level of tension rising considerably, a third poll found that more people agreed with the statement than disagreed (42 percent to 41 percent). In addition, a majority of the public in each poll believed that Israel had not done what it should have to help resolve the crisis.

These results suggested that American public support for Israel could be undermined by anti-U.S. developments in the Middle East. If this were true, it would give fresh heart to terrorists. But the fallacy of such a conclusion was revealed as soon as the hostages were released. A poll taken after the crisis found that a majority of the public again opposed reducing U.S. ties to Israel, and a plurality (47-34 percent) believed that Israel had helped the United States resolve the crisis to the extent of its ability.

The Beirut drama was just the most recent event in a turbulent period. In 1977, Seymour Martin Lipset and William Schneider, reviewing public opinion in the decade following the Six-Day War, found that sympathy for Israel had ranged between 35 and 56 percent while sympathy for the Arabs had varied between 1 and 9 percent.* Since that time, the Camp David peace treaty was signed (1979), Israeli jets bombed Beirut and the Iraqi nuclear reactor (1981), and Israel invaded Lebanon (1982). Still, although there has been a great deal of variation over the years, sympathy for Israel, generally near the 50 percent mark, has always far exceeded that for the Arabs.

The one exception was a September 1982 survey taken just after the massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila. This massacre occurred during the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, and although it was carried out by Lebanese-Christian militiamen, the general perception was that Israel had played some role in it. A Gallup poll taken at the time found sympathy for Israel reaching a record low, and sympathy for the Arabs doubling its previous high. As happened in 1985 during the hostage crisis, this result was widely cited as evidence that the American public disapproved of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and, what was more, that a fundamental shift in public attitudes was taking place. More astute observers argued that the finding was a fluke, and that the basic underlying support for Israel had not diminished. The next poll seemed to confirm this as sympathies returned to their pre-Lebanon levels.

In general, it is true, the public did disapprove of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, especially after the siege of Beirut began, even though many Americans were sympathetic to Israel's announced goal of driving the PLO out of Lebanon. This may demonstrate the way opinion often follows national policy as enunciated in Washington: American officials had supported Israel's stated objective of removing the PLO from southern Lebanon, but opposed attacks on Beirut.

In addition, public opinion reacted to the perception that U.S. and Israeli interests were in conflict; a New York *Times*/CBS News poll in April 1983 found a substantial majority of the public in favor of suspending or reducing military aid to Israel "if the United States disapproves of Israel's not withdrawing troops from Lebanon." Yet here too, despite an overall lack of support for Israel's involvement in Lebanon, the public remained only slightly less sympathetic toward Israel than it had been in the past, and neither the Arab states nor the PLO benefited from public disaffection with the war.

Israel, then, remains nearly as popular today as it was in 1967. Surveys have consistently shown a substantial majority believing that Israel is a friend or a close ally of the United States. In a June 1982 Roper poll, for example, Israel was rated as a closer ally than West Germany, Japan, or France. Not that, in a crisis, the public would be willing to give the same support to Israel as to other allies. When in 1981 Roper asked about the circumstances that might justify using U.S. troops in other parts of the

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* "Carter vs. Israel: What the Polls Reveal," Commentary, November 1977.

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world, only 26 percent felt that such action would be justified if Arabs invaded Israel. But this limit to public support for Israel parallels that of earlier years, as documented by Lipset and Schneider. And at the same time the public remains unsympathetic to Arab arms requests, with majorities opposing the sale of F-15's, AWACS, and missiles to Saudi Arabia, and missiles to Jordan.

IF ARAB arms requests remain unpopular, however, there *has* been a dramatic change over the years in the basic levels of support for the Arabs in general: that support has trebled since 1967, and has increased by 50 percent since 1977. Whereas in 1974, for example, only 1 percent believed either Saudi Arabia or Egypt was a close ally of the United States, by 1982 more than 10 percent believed Saudi Arabia was a close ally and as many as 35 percent of the respondents to Harris polls agreed that Egypt was a close ally. Although Israel still received higher margins of support, a majority now saw these Arab states as friendly to the U.S., a reversal of the attitudes of a decade ago.

Of course, there are Arabs and there are Arabs. For one thing, the public distinguishes between "moderate" Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt and the more radical Arab states like Syria and Libya which are regarded as hostile to the United States.

For another thing, the public distinguishes between Arab states and the Palestinians. Thus, Gallup asks people to score nations on a scale of plus five to minus five, with the positive number indicating a favorable opinion and the negative an unfavorable one. On this scale Israel has been rated even more favorably than on the one recording basic sympathies. But when, during the Lebanon war, the scale was used to rate support for the Palestinian people, as distingushed from the more typical "Arabs," their overall favorable rating was the same as that for Israel. (This result may be related to the timing of the poll, which was taken after Sabra and Shatila.)

Similarly, and perhaps more significantly, support has increased to a near-majority for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. In 1975, only 36 percent of the public favored such a state, while 29 percent believed the Palestinians should continue to live as they do now in Israel and in the neighboring Arab countries. By 1982, the proportion favoring a Palestinian state had increased to 46 percent, with 23 percent opposing. It is important to bear in mind, however, that this does not translate into support for the PLO, which has minimal appeal to the American people.

The increase in public sympathy for the Arabs over the last decade is a significant development. But equally significantly, that sympathy seems to have its limits—it remains at a fairly trivial 12 percent. Moreover, it has *not* come at the expense of support for Israel; most of it has been a result, rather, of a decline in the "neither" or "no-opinion" responses to surveys. A solid 40-50 percent of the American public remains sympathetic to Israel.

AS FOR the bases of that sympathy with Israel, it is positively correlated with income, occupational status, and education (although college-educated people, who are more pro-Israel than the general public, are also more pro-Arab). If we look at the population by age, a similar pattern emerges: Lipset and Schneider, for example, found that older liberals (New Deal, Fair Deal) were more supportive of Israel than younger liberals (New Politics, New Left).

If support for Israel is examined by partisan identification, Republicans, perhaps surprisingly, emerge as consistently more sympathetic toward Israel than Democrats. This may be related to other changes, such as the erosion of liberal identification with Israel noted by Lipset and Schneider; increasingly, Israel's perceived role as the underdog in the Middle East conflict is being replaced by a view of the Palestinians as underdogs. Higher levels of Republican support, by contrast, may be explained by a tendency to rely less on moral arguments altogether and to focus instead on Israel's role as a strategic ally of the West.

Although some data published last year indicated strong black support for Israel, Gallup polls through 1982 show that non-whites are significantly less sympathetic to Israel than whites. Most of the "establishment" black politicians, however, have remained supporters of Israel.

Finally, Jewish support for Israel is still extremely high. Although it is frequently claimed by critics of the Israel lobby that its spokesmen do not reflect the sentiments of the majority of American Jews, the data do not confirm such a contention. There are, to be sure, divisions over particular Israeli policies, such as those regarding the occupied territories, but overall Jewish support for Israel is nearly unanimous, exceeding 90 percent.

A PARTICULARLY serious concern of the American Jewish community is how it is perceived by the public. There is a great fear of a backlash if the community should seem too powerful or appear to be "controlling" Congress, as its critics sometimes contend it does. Polls indicate, however, that the American people do not share the view of these critics; in fact, Americans see Arab and business interests as far more powerful and malevolent than Jewish interests.

For example, in a Gallup poll conducted several weeks after the Senate vote on the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia, although 53 percent of the public agreed that *Israel* had "too much influence" on American policy, only 11 percent felt that way about American Jews. By contrast, 64 percent said Saudi Arabia had too much influence, 70 percent believed oil companies were too influential, and 46 percent felt unions were too influential. In a March 1982 Gallup poll asking which groups have "too much" political influence, only 10 percent named Jews. Business corporations and unions were considered the most powerful by over 40 percent of the respondents, with Arab interests next at 24 percent. Similar results have been found in more recent polls.

In general, foreign policy is not affected by public opinion. This is also true of U.S. policy toward the

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Middle East. Public opinion does provide a context, however, in which policy is made, and it sets the parameters for change. The fact that the American public remains so sympathetic toward Israel is bound to give policy-makers pause before they consider any shift in Middle East policy.

It is true that the public will turn on Israel when its interests are thought to be contrary to those of the United States, as was the case during the Beirut hostage affair and during much of the Lebanon war. It is also true that the Arabs have made impressive strides in improving their standing with the public, a trend that coincides with the increasingly intense and sophisticated propaganda effort currently being waged by the Arab states in this country. Unfortunately for the Arabs, however, greater support for their cause has not eroded support for Israel.

Moreover, it will be much harder for the Arabs to go from 10 to 20 percent than it was to go from 1 to 10 percent; sympathy for them has oscillated between 11 and 14 percent for the last six years, and is now nearer the low figure. Arab leaders may continue to call on the United States to adopt an "evenhanded" policy in the Middle East, but the American public remains committed to supporting Israel.

"Our Genius": Norman Mailer & the Intellectuals

Carol Iannone

IF THERE is one thing the case of Norman Mailer teaches us, it is that ideas matter, that they shape the common life both of the individual and of the culture. For the ideas propagated by Norman Mailer, along with those of such figures as Norman O. Brown and Paul Goodman, exercised a tangible influence in dragging America out of the Eisenhower years into the Aquarian age of the 60's and beyond. And in advancing those ideas, Mailer had the enthusiastic support of a perhaps surprising number of the major intellectuals of our time.

At this point it may be hard to see just what was so magnetic about Mailer in the first place. To date, his prolific but uneven output has yielded a number of notable books, but he can hardly be said to have borne out the ecstatic expectations that many once attached to him (and some still do). The fact is, however, that it was not entirely in terms of literary excellence that he exercised his appeal on people languishing in the supposedly arid air of the late 50's; he spoke, rather, to a hungering need for getting the life of the mind into touch with the life of the instincts. As Irving Howe sums it up for the "New York intellectual group" in Peter Manso's *Mailer: His Life and Times*, a 700-page compendium of reminiscences by family, friends, associates, and colleagues,* "We were essentially rationalistic people for better or worse—he was still able to get at certain things we could not. We admired it, I think even envied it. He was our genius."

Peter Manso, author of three other books (one on Mailer's 1965 campaign for the New York City mayoralty) and a friend of Mailer, has here done a skillful job of editing the interviews he conducted with some 150 people from all corners of his subject's life—Brooklyn childhood, Harvard, the army, New York, European travel, Hollywood, Provincetown, etc. We hear from actors, artists, sports figures, writers, editors, scholars, lawyers, policemen, army buddies, college chums, secretaries, as well as assorted family and friends. Some knew Mailer personally, some professionally, some both. Manso has arranged the reflections chronologically, so that we get a sense of ongoing biography and have the advantage of hearing many (often conflicting) voices describe an incident or period. The book occasionally bogs down in details too small for a reader to care about, and, toward the end especially, it degener-

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ates into a breathless advertisement for Mailer's career (apparently still poised at the edge of transcendence). On the whole, however, given the nature of the subject, *Mailer* is a valuable exercise, if perhaps sometimes against its own intentions.

To be sure, not all the members of the "New York intellectual group" that adopted Mailer as "our genius" were blind to the morally disturbing aspects of his work, the life of the instincts being notorious for disrupting more ordinary decencies. Specifically, his now legendary essay, "The White Negro" (1957), celebrating what he called "hipsterism," offered as an example the courage that might drive two strong eighteen-year-old hoodlums to beat in the brains of a middle-aged candy-store keeper, thereby attacking the institution of private property and "daring the unknown." This was greeted at the time by Norman Podhoretz as "one of the most morally gruesome ideas I have ever come across, and which indicates where the ideology of hipsterism can lead." But a year later Podhoretz expressed sympathy "with Mailer's latest effort to maintain a sense of huge possibility, even if one is totally out of sympathy with some of the doctrines he has recently been preaching." And William Phillips, the editor of *Partisan Review*, observes in *Mailer* that "while 'The White Negro' was considered intellectually nonacceptable, it was still acceptable for purposes of fictional exploration." Thus, although no one really ignored the ugliness of some of Mailer's ideas, he seemed to operate under a kind of extra-moral extenuation. The reprehensible notions advanced in "The White Negro" could be understood somehow as a necessary element in the dissection of the world of the instincts that it was Mailer's assigned mission to undertake.

For his part, Mailer was glad enough to assume this public role as "genius" of the irrational, which he may have recognized as his ticket to greatness. After the tremendous success of *The Naked and the Dead*, according to Barbara Probst Solomon in the Manso book, Mailer had panicked at getting

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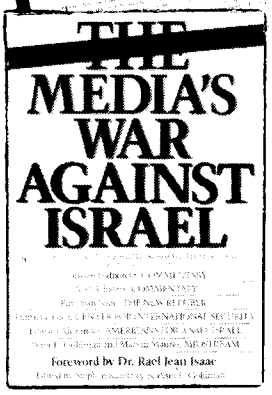

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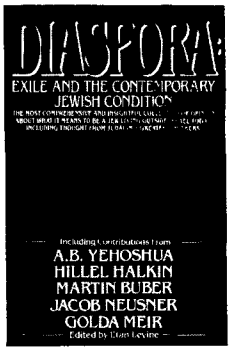

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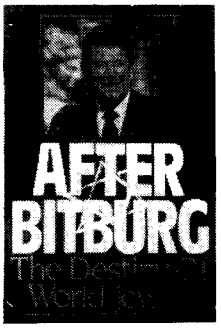

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"caught short being a leftover Dreiser or Dos Passos." And as Mailer himself comments here:

> Writing "The White Negro" emboldened me to raise more questions. . . . It gave me the courage to make remarks of the order of "I shall attempt to answer the question of"—the oft-quoted sentence in which I list all those things—"murder, suicide, orgy, orgasm, incest," and so forth. My true purpose as a writer, I recognized, might be to tackle questions like that. They were going to be my frontier, and if I had any chance at all of becoming a great writer it was to move in that direction.

NOT long after "The White Negro," however, Mailer's real-life flirtations with violence (which had to that point found outlets in drinking and brawling), passed over into the nearly fatal stabbing of his second wife, Adele, and it began to be clear just how much the public and private selves had fused. Mailer's lawyer, Joseph Brill, declared at the time that "This is a talent that must be protected," and Mailer himself pleaded his own cause by telling the judge, "If you put me in Bellevue, it will be an indictment of my *work* as the work of a crazy man" (emphasis added).

While not everyone went so far as the friend who felt that Mailer "finally did to Adele what should've been done years earlier," or as his mother, who reflected, "If Norman would stop marrying these women who make him do these terrible things . . . ," there were many who believed he could not be held responsible for his deed, who saw him as a victim of uncontrollable forces, who worried less over the state of his soul than over the state of his career. In *Mailer*, playwright Maria Irene Fornes seems alone to have glimpsed how profoundly Mailer's public role had superseded ordinary moral considerations:

> Norman I saw about two months after the stabbing. I wasn't close to them anymore, but he told me that at first they said that Adele had fallen on something, on broken glass, but then he'd decided the next day, "After all I couldn't hide behind a woman's skirt." To me that was really so sad and ugly. I mean, he stabbed her. An ordinary person commits a stabbing, he doesn't have this choice, whether to hide behind this or that. I'm talking about Norman's privilege, that even in a moment of despair he is reacting in a privileged manner. . . . It's like saying "I won't go to jail in Alabama, I'll go to jail in West Newport."

Fittingly, however, the entire episode—which did indeed include some time in Bellevue—failed to put even a dent in Mailer's career; on the contrary, it helped to solidify his reputation as a fearless explorer of the self. Yet from the vantage point of today it must be said that as his sense of himself as a public figure grew stronger, his understanding of himself seems to have grown ever fainter. Although many in this book speak of his courage, perhaps the most important act of courage, that of genuine self-discovery, seems to have remained beyond him, and the various autobiographical reflections gathered in such works as *Advertisements for Myself*, *Cannibals and Christians*, and so forth, while full of self-revelation, appear devoid of self-insight. Even his famous autobiographical style, in which he speaks of himself, dissociatedly, in the third person, tends to feed this escape from self-confrontation.

IT SHOULD thus scarcely have been surprising that some two decades after he stabbed his wife Mailer found himself involved in another, oddly similar, legal and moral imbroglio. For some time since the late 70's he had been in correspondence with a prisoner named Jack Henry Abbott who had spent twenty-five of his thirty-seven years behind bars, in part for having killed a man. Thanks largely to a letter written by Mailer attesting to the prisoner's literary talent, Abbott was set free on parole despite psychiatrists' warnings about his tendency to violence. During Abbott's first weeks out of prison, he lived in a halfway house on the Bowery—in his words, "the most violent and bombed out area in New York City." But his life was not confined to the Bowery; a book of his prison memoirs, *The Belly of the Beast*, was published to great acclaim, and he was a frequent guest at the Mailer home in New York and at least once in Provincetown. He was, however, also growing more hostile and restive, and had begun to carry a knife. One night outside a Greenwich Village restaurant, he plunged it into the heart of a twenty-two-year-old man named Richard Adan—an aspiring actor and playwright, a newlywed working part-time as a waiter in his father-in-law's restaurant. Adan's last words were, "You didn't have to kill me."

The detective assigned to this case, William Majeski, had "seen a lot of bodies," but he found that

> this was different. Although Adan was twenty-two, he looked younger, and his face, the expression, was angelic. Also there was a tremendous amount of blood. The knife had gone to the heart, and apparently just about every drop of blood in his body had been pumped out. There was literally a pool going from the body across the sidewalk to the curb and out into the gutter.

Claims by Abbott that Adan had intended him harm turned out to be quite false; as this book makes clear, Abbott was filtering events through a prison paranoia. Indeed, according to Abbott's lawyer Ivan Fisher, Mailer himself said to Abbott over the phone, "Look, I don't care what you say, you killed a decent guy. You keep talking about what a crazy he was, but I checked him out. That kid was sweet as hell. Admit you did a lousy thing, admit you're gonna have to pay for it. . . . Stop lying to yourself."

Perhaps a little like Voltaire, however, who reportedly refused to discuss his free moral views at the dinner table lest his servants overhear and rob him, Mailer spoke one way to Abbott in private while in public his story was different, relying heavily on the principle of literary extenuation. "Culture is worth a little risk," he asserted, adding, "I'm willing to gamble with a portion of society to save this man's talent." Nor did he neglect to mention the extenuating circumstances springing out of America's "fascist" heart—an *idée fixe* for Mailer—in particular the prison conditions Abbott had suffered and in

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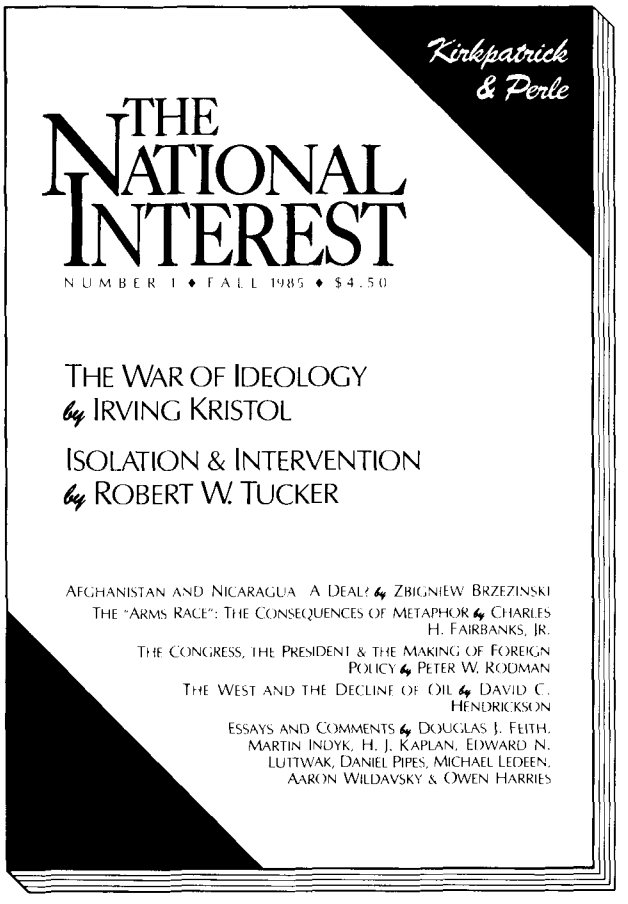
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general the "violence" of our state and our institutions.

Mailer did issue enough statements of self-blame—if none of self-shame—to satisfy a number of his admirers, from Liz Smith to George Plimpton. Others among his erstwhile supporters had fallen away over the years, in varying degrees of disgust and disagreement, and the Abbott episode merely confirmed their more sober view. Disturbingly, however, some still seem caught in the Mailer mystique. Thus, Irving Howe's remark on the Abbott affair—"My guess is that I wouldn't think Abbott's as talented as Norman does, but it's not criminal to make a mistake"—almost makes it sound as if Mailer's failure here were one of literary judgment.

At another point, Howe castigates himself for not having fought with Mailer over the storekeeper passage in "The White Negro" (first published in Howe's magazine *Dissent*)—actually, this is not the only celebratory passage on violence in the essay—and wonders aloud, "Would he still defend that sentence about the eighteen-year-olds 'daring the unknown' by murdering a fifty-year-old storekeeper? That seems to me crucial. That's where it begins, you see." Similarly, Diana Trilling muses, "What are we allowed to get away with by calling it literature rather than life? Was Norman's hipster, his 'White Negro,' entirely a figure of speech? I'm not at all sure, and I don't think Norman himself has quite figured that one out either."

WHY do Howe and Mrs. Trilling still trouble themselves over this issue? It would seem that more than enough evidence has accumulated to show that Norman Mailer has trafficked in ideas that are evil, and that have borne fruit after their own kind. Too, Mailer has had ample opportunity to repudiate "that sentence" and others like it; the fact that he has not done so hardly entitles him to the continuing benefit of the doubt. It would seem to suggest not that he isn't "sure," or that he hasn't "quite figured that one out," but that he is, and that he has.

Mrs. Trilling's perseverance seems especially baffling since she emphatically observes of the infamous sentence that it was "bad writing because it was bad thinking because it was bad being." But she was apparently impressed with Mailer's behavior on the Dick Cavett show during the Abbott affair, feeling that he had come a long way from his "hipster" days. (A transcript of the interview reveals that despite obligatory breast-beating, Mailer withdrew nothing and in fact reiterated his views on individual violence being in many ways a natural response to the "violence of the state.") Mr. Trilling's words close this book; in them she terms Mailer "the best writing artist of our time" and expresses encouragement for his "excursions into dissidence." Although she is careful to call for balance—"My superego friends could use the correction in Norman just as Norman needed the principle of control which they might teach him"—her position depressingly suggests that nothing at all has been learned since the 50's.

One of the women recorded in this book reveals a great deal about Mailer's life and times when she remarks: "We were all terribly Scott Fitzgeraldish, very dramatic and romantic . . . having high times. It didn't occur to me that anybody was really going off the wall." Yet Fitzgerald saw through his own boozy romantic destructiveness, while Mailer seems less to resemble Fitzgerald than he does one of Fitzgerald's fictional characters, the ones who break and smash things and then retreat unreflectingly back into money and privilege. To Jack Henry Abbott, after the Adan stabbing, Mailer confided that he had felt the same "compulsion of fate" when he stabbed his wife Adele, "that it was irreversible, the logic of events" (in Abbott's words). This, presumably, is the same logic according to which playing with fire means that someone will get burned. Yes, ideas do matter. Even, or perhaps especially, bad ones.

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The Policy-makers

THE OTHER ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT: MAKING AMERICA'S MIDDLE EAST POLICY, FROM TRUMAN TO REAGAN. By STEVEN L. SPIEGEL. *University of Chicago Press. 522 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by DANIEL PIPES

How is American policy toward the Arab-Israel dispute made, and who makes it? Steven Spiegel, a professor of political science at the University of California at Los Angeles, focuses on these questions in his excellent and important study, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict.*

To begin with the first question —how decisions are made—Spiegel shows that each of the Presidents since World War II has followed a highly idiosyncratic approach to the Middle East. Harry S. Truman had no goals of his own, but dealt with problems as they arose. He took advice from disparate quarters —including even his former haberdashery partner. Despite a pro-Israel reputation, he in fact favored the Arabs one time, Israel the next. "The President swayed back and forth as internal and external constraints affected him. The outcome was a weak and inconsistent policy, which neither side could totally influence."

Dwight D. Eisenhower replaced this chaos with a highly structured, military-type chain of command. Disliking competition over foreign policy, he eliminated non-governmental influences. Within the government, Eisenhower and his aides shared a consistent view of American interests in the Middle East, one that favored closer relations with the Arabs. Oblivious to the causes of the Arab-Israel dispute, they ignored its underlying issues; the result was "a program coherent in its global, regional, and local objectives, but rigid in formulation and content." When it eventually became clear that this "grandiose and comprehensive strategy" had failed, the administration lost interest in the Middle East.

John F. Kennedy considered the Eisenhower decision-making process deadening. Instead, he "institutionalized the conflict in the White House staff," having advocates of pro-Israel and pro-Arab points of view argue their positions in memos and in person.

Lyndon B. Johnson approached the Middle East somewhat like Truman. Acting passively, without a strategy, he responded to crises in an *ad-hoc* manner. Pro-Arab and pro-Israel factions pressured the President relentlessly and "Johnson found it harder than most Presidents to resolve the two strains and therefore adopted both to the confusion of all involved parties." "Passivity, avoidance, and lack of imagination" characterized Johnson and his aides.

In Richard M. Nixon's first term, two top officials, the Secretary of State and the National Security Adviser, "engaged in an unprecedented and prolonged controversy over Middle East issues." Despite Nixon's usual decisiveness in foreign policy, when it came to the Middle East he could not make up his mind. "Middle East policy during the first term was thus conducted with a marked lack of coherence, in contrast to other issues that went through the orderly Nixon decision-making apparatus."

Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, became Secretary of State in the Nixon-Ford administration and dominated Middle East policy so completely that government debate on the Arab-Israel issue came to a virtual halt. Kissinger pursued a highly personal and complex strategy in the Middle East that at times even excluded the President.

The consistent pro-Arab outlook of Jimmy Carter's administration is termed by Spiegel an "astounding philosophical consensus." The President and his advisers were fully agreed on the need to solve the Palestinian question, to bring the Soviet Union into diplomatic activities, and to win Saudi help. Near-unanimity encouraged this administration to stick rigidly to its preconceptions, thus ignoring both public opinion and developments in the Middle East itself.

Ronald Reagan's first three years, finally, were marked by "a distinct philosophical perspective, formulated by a passive and even uninvolved chief executive who was surrounded by competing and frequently changing players." The President set general guidelines which he expected aides to implement. Although they disagreed markedly on Middle East issues, he let their arguments run on. The administration was characterized by its "inconsistency and divided voice." The President's peculiar approach to the Middle East—"a combination of emotion, ideology, lack of knowledge, and instinctive political acumen"—resulted in an especially amorphous policy.

EVEN this brief survey points up the special decision-making problems involved in Middle East policy. Virtually every recent President has found it unmanageable: Truman and Johnson let themselves be buffeted by events; Eisenhower and Carter tried to impose order but failed; Nixon-I found it the one region he could not treat systematically, while Nixon-II and Ford gave the region over to their chief aide; and Reagan allowed anarchy.

It is tempting to blame Arabs and Israelis for this state of affairs, to shake one's head and grumble about their intransigence; but surely this is inadequate. Relations between the two Koreas are at least as hostile as relations in the Middle East, yet in Korea that hostility serves to clarify issues rather than the reverse. The dilemma of Arab-Israel policy is a function instead of the unique debate that takes

DANIEL PIPES, *a professor at the U.S. Naval War College, is the author of* In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power *(Basic Books) and the editor of the* Harvard Middle East Papers.

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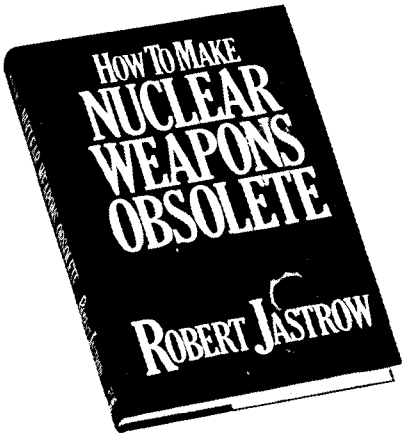

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place about it in the United States.

The Middle East alone falls outside the central foreign-policy issue of our time, the question of how to deal with the Soviet challenge. Elsewhere around the globe, American conservatives and liberals argue over the same set of issues: the utility of force, Soviet responsibility for local problems, and the like. If you know an American's views on the USSR, you can pretty well predict his opinions on Central America, Western Europe, Southern Africa, or East Asia.

But not on the Middle East. Homeland of monotheism and site of the world's greatest oil reserves, the region has a special place in American politics. When it comes to the Middle East, religious passions and financial interests overwhelm the usual Right/Left divisions in favor of an entirely different dichotomy, the pro-Arab and the pro-Israel. Neither conservatives nor liberals consistently favor the one side or the other. All four possible combinations—pro-Arab conservatives, pro-Israel conservatives, pro-Arab liberals, pro-Israel liberals—are active in American politics. Pro-Arab conservatives stress the importance of oil and business ties; pro-Israel conservatives note Israel's usefulness as a strategic ally against the Soviet Union. Liberals friendly to the Arabs emphasize the suffering of the Palestinians; liberals friendly to Israel stress Israel's democracy and its high moral standards.

These divisions bedevil government decision-making, as Spiegel shows. Although voters select a President with, in foreign affairs, an eye primarily toward East-West issues, and although a President chooses his aides on the same basis, an administration's Soviet policy is no key to its views on the Middle East. Eisenhower was a cold warrior while Carter sought conciliation with Moscow, but both favored the Arabs. Eisenhower and Nixon both made anti-Communism the central tenet of their foreign policy, but one favored the Arabs and the other Israel.

Top advisers are equally idiosyncratic. As Spiegel notes, William Rogers and Henry Kissinger agreed on the Soviet Union but not on the Middle East; conversely, Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski fought over Soviet policy but agreed on the Arab-Israel dispute. Though there are no fixed rules, members of the cabinet dealing with foreign issues, from Dean Acheson to Cyrus Vance, have generally favored the pro-Arab viewpoint; White House officials, from Clark Clifford to Walter Mondale, have leaned toward Israel.

How much attention the President pays to the Middle East affects the feuding among his advisers. The more deeply a President involves himself, the more faithfully his staff sticks to his line; consistency follows. Eisenhower and Carter saw the Arab-Israel conflict as central to their concerns, and therefore presided over the most cohesive policies. Conversely, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson absented themselves somewhat, and the result was haphazard decision-making.

THIS brings us to the second question: who makes decisions? Spiegel offers a daring hypothesis: U.S. policy reflects "the basic assumptions of the President, the individuals on whom he relies for advice, and the resulting decision-making system which converts ideas into policies." Presidents, in particular, have a decisive role, for they establish the goals, pick the players, and make the final decisions. Moreover, Spiegel argues, in most cases they take steps in accordance with their consciences and "generally for reasons of state, largely unrelated to domestic politics and often in defiance of domestic groups."

In other words, "the principal policy-makers and their ideas," and these alone, are what count. With one blow Spiegel thus dispenses with voters, Congressmen, Senators, State and Defense Department bureaucrats, lobbyists, businessmen, journalists, intellectuals, and scholars. Congress he deems "largely irrelevant" to the peace process. As for interest groups and bureaucrats, they can delay or accelerate decisions, but they cannot affect their substance. They "limit policy; they do not define it."

This concentration on the presidential elite is seductive in its

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simplicity, and it represents a refreshing contrast to the commonly accepted nonsense that U.S. policy is run by interest groups. (Hafez al-Assad, for example, has stated for the record that Syria's problem is "the Zionist influence in the United States; without it, everything would be much simpler.")

But does Spiegel's paradigm adequately explain American decisions concerning the Middle East? Notwithstanding my respect for his command of the subject, this thesis seems to me inadequate. The elements Spiegel relegates to the sidelines do more than create the framework in which officials act; they also stimulate and provide incentives.

To begin with, as even Spiegel acknowledges, domestic pressure groups do affect Middle East policy when the President chooses not to be actively involved. "If the [Arab-Israel] issue is given low priority, presidential attention will be minimal and the influence of the bureaucracy, Congress, and interest groups will increase." The administrations of Truman, Johnson, and Reagan exemplify this situation.

Second, the pro-Israel vote should not be underestimated. It is highly mobilized and shapes the Middle East planks of both congressional and presidential candidates; it can even influence the outcome of elections. While campaign promises are, of course, broken, they usually do indicate basic intent. Moreover, the pro-Israel vote can affect the composition of the presidential elite. George W. Ball might well have been appointed Secretary of States if not for his extreme hostility to Israel; Senator John G. Tower of Texas took care to become more friendly to Israel when positioning himself (unsuccessfully) as a candidate for Secretary of Defense in late 1984.

Third, the bias of Foreign Service Officers against Israel does more than delay or accelerate decisions; it dominates a Secretary of State like William Rogers who enters office inexperienced in foreign affairs and without developed views on the Arabs and Israel. Henry Kissinger and Alexander Haig are

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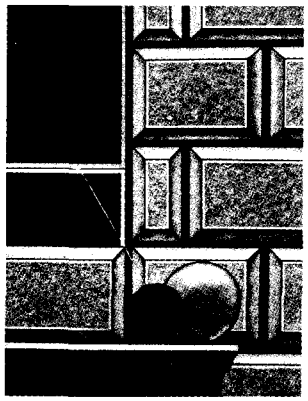

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probably the only Secretaries not to be affected in this manner.

Fourth, as Steven Emerson has demonstrated in his recent investigation of petrodollar influence in Washington, *The American House of Saud,* business interests can shape U.S. policy in the Middle East. An example was the passage of the AWACS package in the Senate in October 1981, a decision fraught with potential effects on warfare between the Arabs and Israel.

Fifth, the fact that the Arab-Israel conflict falls outside the conservative/liberal debate enhances the importance of bureaucrats and interest groups. Since the political parties lack personnel trained in Middle East affairs, more key positions are held by bureaucrats, who exert more influence. Interest groups also gain, for the usual ideological stands and coalitions do not apply to the Middle East.

Sixth, the presidential elite derives *its* ideas from the outside. John Maynard Keynes once noted that "practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist"; a similar pattern holds for Middle East policy. Busy officials do very little original thinking; they derive their goals and their principles from sources outside government. When the intellectual climate changes, as it did after the October 1973 war, politicians must respond. Spiegel, indeed, implies as much in his observation that "battling for the hearts and minds of the American elite has been the true subject of the Arab-Israeli war for Washington."

Finally, Spiegel exaggerates the role of Washington. The chapters of this book are arranged by American Presidents, where one would expect them to be arranged by decisive events in the Middle East: wars, treaties, changes of regime. Like Strobe Talbott, whose books on arms control portray that process in terms of American factions rather than in terms of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, Spiegel has allowed himself to become so absorbed by the Washington sideshow that he sometimes neglects the main event.

This is in a way understandable. As a professor of political science, Spiegel must implicitly compare Middle East policy-making to domestic policy-making. In contrast to such matters as labor relations, education, taxation, abortion, and welfare, where immense pressure is felt from constituents, foreign relations must seem an altogether quiet affair, dominated by a relatively few people in the capital. And there is some truth to this: every administration finds it has more room to maneuver in the world than in the country. At the same time, however, within the realm of foreign affairs, the Arab-Israel conflict is one that is uniquely subject to constituent pressures. The presidential elite controls Middle East policy far less than it does policy toward NATO, China, South Africa, or other regions.

Spiegel concludes his study with a negative assessment of U.S. policy-making in the Middle East:

> There have been occasional moments of spectacular success—UN Resolution 242 in 1967, the Kissinger shuttle, the Camp David accords, and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Unfulfilled objectives, however, have been the norm: from trusteeship proposals [instead of an independent Israel] to the Baghdad Pact; from the Johnson and Rogers Plans to autonomy [on the West Bank] and the Reagan plan.

He might have added to this list the 1953 Johnston plan to share the Jordan River waters, the May 1983 accords between Lebanon and Israel, as well as many other failed initiatives.

Spiegel has several explanations for this sorry record. For one thing, he argues, Washington is arrogant. "American leaders have consistently assumed that they knew better than other involved statesmen how to provide for peace and security of the region." The dubious notion that the U.S. on its own can resolve the Arab-Israel dispute leads to a persistent unilateralism. Consequently, Washington does not limit itself to responding to events in the Middle East, but devises plans for resolving the Arab-Israel conflict for its own reasons and at the time of its convenience. Each newly elected President since 1953 has floated an Arab-Israel initiative early in his first term: the Johnston plan in 1953, the Dulles plan in 1955, the Johnson plan in 1962, the Rogers plan in 1969, the Carter plan in 1977, and the Reagan plan in 1982. Inspired as they were by American rather than Middle Eastern concerns, all failed completely.

American politicians fancy that our policy of selling arms to Israel permits us to dictate terms. Some administrations "arm Israel to the teeth," hoping this will win political flexibility; others withhold arms in the effort to coerce obedience. The record shows that neither strategy works. Spiegel argues that Israel is flexible only when it can strike a favorable deal, and this depends more on the Arabs than on American arms policies.

The U.S. makes similar mistakes with the Arabs. Ignoring the crucial fact that Arab states are too intensely involved in their own disputes to align closely with a superpower, Washington keeps trying to lure Arab leaders into joining anti-Soviet coalitions—the Baghdad Pact, Kennedy's opening to Egypt, the Nixon Doctrine, Haig's strategic consensus—and is invariably disappointed.

Spiegel also faults American politicians for dwelling so much on the Arab-Israel conflict. Preoccupation with that dispute has meant slighting other developments in the area, with disastrous consequences. Muammar al-Qaddafi received American help to consolidate his power in Libya while our attention was distracted by the War of Attrition at the Suez Canal; the falling Shah of Iran took a back seat to Camp David; the 1982 gains in Lebanon were frittered away by the Reagan administration's turn to the West Bank issue.

Still, whatever qualifications or criticisms of specific points of interpretation one might wish to enter about *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict,* it remains enormously valuable as a detailed and systematic examination of American policy in the Middle East. Thanks to Steven Spiegel's book, it is now possible to discuss this issue in an educated way.

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Betrayal

THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF AN ALBINO TERRORIST. By BREYTEN BREYTENBACH. *Farrar Straus & Giroux. 396 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH, considered the best modern poet in the Afrikaans language, first received substantial publicity in the English-speaking world in 1977. At that time, he had been imprisoned in his native South Africa for some two years. A further legal proceeding, based on charges of terrorist activity while in prison, brought him to the attention of the liberal and Left communities of Britain and the U.S. In 1982, thanks to efforts by French president François Mitterrand, Breytenbach was released. *The True Confessions* is a semi-poetic account of his trials and imprisonment. It has been widely reviewed here, with Joseph Lelyveld, in the New York *Times Book Review*, typically comparing Breytenbach's martyrdom with that of the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, who was imprisoned and eventually consigned to an anonymous death in the Siberian labor camps for writing a poem attacking Stalin. The South African poet has even made it onto the American talk-show circuit.

LET US begin with Breytenbach himself, his origins and his literary work. Breyten Breytenbach was born in 1937 in the heart of Afrikaner society. His two brothers are, today, active supporters of the South African establishment, with one serving as a commanding officer in the South African forces in Namibia, the other affiliated with the state security agencies. Breytenbach became a prominent member of the group of nonconformist Afrikaans writers known as the *sestigers*, or 60's generation, a group which also includes the novelist André Brink.

Breytenbach's poetic style is a distinctively affecting mixture of surrealism and philosophical pessimism: his wit, and his austere figures, come across rather invitingly in English translation. He is also a talented painter, and when he left South Africa in the mid-1960's he went to live in Paris. There he met a Vietnamese artist, Yolande Ngo Thi Hoang Lien, and married her. Yolande became the central subject of his creative work, which developed into an extended erotic meditation drawing on Buddhist and other Asian sources. Unfortunately, Yolande's Asian ethnicity also barred Breytenbach from returning to South Africa in her company: their case clearly contra-

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ, *a new contributor, is editor of the* Journal of Contemporary Studies.

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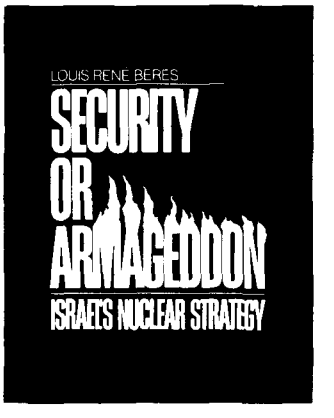

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vened the country's then-standing laws concerning racially mixed marriages.

The conflict between Breytenbach's love for his wife and his identification both with the South African landscape and with the Afrikaans language drove him, in the years that followed, into an extreme position on the apartheid regime. By 1975 he had formed an organization at first called Atlas and then Okhela ("Spark" in Zulu), made up of South African whites living in European exile and collaborating with the black-led African National Congress (ANC). Like the ANC, Okhela saw its future in armed struggle.

In the mid-70's Breytenbach chose to return to South Africa, utilizing a false passport in the name of Christian Galaska, a French citizen. His mission was to set up a network of Okhela supporters and black activists, including the ill-fated leader Steve Biko (who died in detention in 1978); the practical aim was support for black trade unions. As *The True Confessions* hauntingly recounts, in South Africa Breytenbach was tracked down and arrested as he was preparing to fly back to Europe.

At this point the story becomes complicated. When he appeared in court Breytenbach presented himself as a contrite, erring son of the Afrikaner nation, pleading for forgiveness. Even more curiously, the Left, in South Africa and elsewhere, which had done little enough to help him after his arrest, altogether backed off from any further association, denouncing him as a virtual renegade and stool pigeon. He was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment, and had served two (entirely in solitary confinement) when the charge of terrorism from within prison walls returned him to court in 1977.

DURING the second trial, while the pro-ANC Left continued to hold him at arm's length, an informal network of artists in Europe and North America began working to organize and express some form of solidarity with him. It was then that I myself became involved. I had been active in a related matter concerning Argentina, and through a literary acquaintance in Holland was asked to participate in the Breytenbach effort. I did so, becoming the head of the Committee on the Breytenbach Case, based in San Francisco but circulating materials throughout the United States. Until the middle of 1978 I received a continuous flow of documentation on the affair from Europe. We published bulletins describing the poet's progress through the second trial, which ended in a minor fine; we then concentrated on demands for his release.

In May 1978, a new item was introduced into the mosaic. I received from my European contact a clipping from a South African newspaper, reporting the assassination in Paris of Henri Curiel, an Egyptian Jew who had been a close acquaintance of Breytenbach during the latter's European exile. Curiel had been identified in the French press as a "mastermind of terrorism," and was described by the South Africans as "the mystery man who sent Breytenbach to South Africa clandestinely." An accompanying note from my European correspondent stated that Curiel had indeed maintained an "underground organization for training [in] guerrilla warfare, counterfeiting passports, instructing in coded information methods." Furthermore, that the passport given by Curiel to Breytenbach before the latter's flight to South Africa "probably was in fact a trap," and that Breytenbach had been "set up by some Stalinists (or, say, Moscow-oriented . . . activists), who . . . subsequently tipped off the . . . South African secret police."

It would be hard for someone not in my situation at that moment to imagine the impact this letter had on me. My European friend was unchallengeable as a source of information. The very possibility that a man of Breytenbach's talent as a writer and painter could have been so offhandedly sacrificed by Soviet political agents called to mind the queasiest moments of Stalin's own reign. Too, the idea was not reassuring that our little group of pro-Breytenbach activists might have been simply victims of

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our own enthusiasm. We had committed resources and time, attracting a certain degree of harassment from defenders of South Africa while also working in a kind of moral quarantine, regarded with ill-concealed hostility by the rest of the anti-apartheid movement in the U.S. We had thought the coolness of our pro-ANC contacts was a product of racial suspicion that could be overcome considering the human-rights aspects of the case and its potential for embarrassing the Pretoria regime. We were wrong. The Breytenbach affair was, and is, much more of a potential scandal for the South African Left than for the country's political rulers.

For the plain truth, as Breytenbach's book confirms at numerous points, is that he was betrayed. "I was betrayed even before I arrived [in South Africa]," he declares flatly. "It was not my idea to go down there but I had to submit myself to the majority decision.... Stupidly vain, when told there were certain things which only I could do, it touched me, and I fell for it." And who, then, was responsible for this? "My dear, ineffective, fat, institutionalized friends in the liberation movement . . . those professional diplomats, those living off the fat of the suffering of our people back home and who've done so for years and will do so until they die." And why did this sleazy drama transpire? Because Breytenbach had begun to question the Stalinist tendencies dominating the South African Left. "To my shame as a South African I have to admit" that the Communist party of South Africa "was among the first organizations lauding the Soviet Union for its invasion of Hungary and again later of Czechoslovakia." As for Curiel, that he "was a KGB operative had crossed" Breytenbach's mind. "It's really not so far-fetched . . . some of his oldest friends quit . . . because, they say, he was using [them] as a vehicle to serve the Soviets. . . . He never made any bones about his total commitment to orthodox Soviet Communism, call it Stalinism."

THE full betrayal involved in the Breytenbach case is only comprehensible through a further digression on the Curiel case, a strange matter in its own right. Although I dropped out of touch with the Breytenbach enthusiasts in Europe soon after receiving the clipping and letter on Curiel's assassination —I was simply too demoralized to continue—I remained interested in learning more about Curiel. In 1981, Claire Sterling devoted a full chapter of her book *The Terror Network* to Curiel, in which she claims that the process ending in the latter's assassination in Paris had begun when Breytenbach, disillusioned and abandoned in prison, divulged information on the Curiel network to the South African secret police. She notes that, presumably on the basis of Breytenbach's information, Curiel's terrorist support network had been exposed in the French magazine *Le Point* in 1976. In a highly interesting tidbit she also points out that Curiel was the cousin of the famous British subordinate of Kim Philby, George (Bihar) Blake, who has been described as the most effective of all Soviet spies.

Late last year Jean-François Revel became involved in the Curiel controversy when, writing in *Encounter*, he defended *Le Point*, for which he now writes, against a pro-Communist French author, Gilles Perrault, who had produced a massive apologia for Curiel titled *Un Homme à Part* ("A Man Apart"). Perrault's opus, an incredibly prolix exercise in revolutionary "hagiography" (to use Revel's term), depicts Curiel as a hero of Third World solidarity and peace, more concerned with arranging meetings between Israelis and moderate Palestinians than with his admittedly "fanatical" attachment to the Soviet Union. Perrault fails to address the charges in Claire Sterling's book, which appeared three years before his, or to deal with the association between Curiel and Blake. He does, however, directly state that those who sent Breytenbach to South Africa knew he was headed for disaster.

DURING the Breytenbach solidarity campaign of 1977, we tried to por-

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tray him as a victim of a kind of treason on the part of his Afrikaner parents and brothers. But as his memoirs show, his Afrikaner family stood by him with greater loyalty than was shown by his adopted "family of the revolution." This brings us to the real tragedy of Breyten Breytenbach. It is not that a talented artist was temporarily locked up by a repressive regime against which he had plotted violent resistance, but rather that such an individual should accept his betrayal, as he seems to do in his memoirs, and place the blame on his own "weaknesses" as an intellectual. Breytenbach has as yet done virtually nothing to subject his leftist mentors and betrayers to the kind of searching moral inquiry one takes for granted must be addressed to his Afrikaner compatriots, including his own relatives. In this he resembles no one so much as the character Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's great novel about Stalinist betrayal, *Darkness at Noon*.

By now it should be obvious to all that the world is a curious and cruel place, in which the sentiments of a poet and painter are easily perverted by such paradoxes as the need to find a new family relationship where one's own has been unsatisfying. Breytenbach seems to have learned a bitter lesson from this experience: he has declared that from now on he will concentrate only on his poetry and painting. Yet this, I believe, is the wrong lesson. Breytenbach is no Mandelstam, and the comparison is specious: Mandelstam lost his life for writing a single poem, whereas Breytenbach, after participating in a revolutionary conspiracy, came out of prison safely. But neither should Breytenbach allow himself to become a Rubashov, one who accepts his degradation at the hands of his putative comrades. At least the person on whom the fictional Rubashov was based, Nikolai Bukharin, attempted to subvert the 1938 Moscow trial in which he was judged and condemned. In this respect Breyten Breytenbach still has much to learn; one can be thankful that now he has the opportunity to learn it.

Back to School(s)

THE SCHOOLS WE DESERVE: REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATIONAL CRISES OF OUR TIME. By *Diane Ravitch*. *Basic Books. 337 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by BRIGITTE BERGER

This collection of Diane Ravitch's recent essays on problems of contemporary education is an uncommonly attractive book. The essays are without exception instructive, well-reasoned, and smoothly written. Moreover, in contrast to her earlier books (on the "great school wars" of 19th-century America and the troubled recent history of American education), Mrs. Ravitch here abandons the neutral stance of the historian to speak boldly about the forces that continue to hold the nation's public schools in the grip of an unrelenting decline. As a historian, Mrs. Ravitch is able to put the perennial American quest for school reform into much needed perspective; as an astute analyst of educational issues she succeeds in exposing a good number of the fallacies in recent pedagogical preoccupations and programs; and as one committed to public education, she sets forth proposals and policy prescriptions that are distinguished both by a measured objectivity and by good common sense.

The twenty-one essays in this collection range from specific issues—desegregation, bilingual education, tuition tax credits, the use and misuse of texts—to broad questions of educational philosophy. Two recurrent themes that guide Mrs. Ravitch's discussion of particular issues are the importance of a liberal-arts education, both for individuals and for the future of democratic society, and the problematics of cultural pluralism.

For Mrs. Ravitch, "What happens in the schools and to the schools is determined by our assumptions, our ideas, and our policies." Hence, the causes for the precipitous academic slide in pub-

BRIGITTE BERGER *teaches sociology at Wellesley College and is the author (with Peter L. Berger) of* The War Over the Family.

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lic education must be sought not in the schools themselves, or in the teaching profession, but in a "lack of consensus" concerning the nature and purpose of national public education. As she writes, "Every nation gets the schools that it deserves, and we have today a system that reflects our own conflicts about the relative importance of different social and educational values."

This "lack of consensus" is what accounts, in Mrs. Ravitch's view, for the pendulum swings of American education from traditionalism to progressivism, from a preoccupation with old-fashioned academic goals to the determination that the schools must become a major instrument for social change. Mrs. Ravitch, however, is an optimist, and she believes that a balance can yet be struck:

> Perhaps the pendulum has swung once too often. Perhaps it may yet be possible to find a common ground on which parents, teachers, and others concerned about education may agree, a common ground that encompasses the educational ideals of the traditionalists and the compassion of the progressives.

Mrs. Ravitch's optimism may puzzle those convinced that the nation's schools are in shambles, but it is not without foundation. For one thing, contrary to earlier, negative findings on the ability of schools to affect student achievement significantly—findings that themselves turned out to be destructive of the morale of teachers and administrators—recent studies, such as the new Coleman report on "Public and Private Schools," demonstrate convincingly that schools do make a difference after all. For another thing, Mrs. Ravitch suggests that the recent turbulence over the nation's educational system has produced a new opportunity: "The bad news about our educational needs may actually be good news, because it means that we now have the political consensus to do something about improving the schools." In saying this Mrs. Ravitch is differentiating herself at once from leftists who would "deschool" society altogether in their quest for "equality and social justice for all" and from those on the Right who see the home, and not the school, as the primary locus of education.

In her commitment to the concept of "a good liberal education for *all* children," Mrs. Ravitch takes a stand against the many programs that have been showered upon the public schools in the name of progressivism. Thus she is opposed to tracking children into essentially separate curricula with widely divergent occupational goals, particularly when such tracking results in shunting the children of the poor into vocational programs that hold little promise for their future. She opposes bilingual education, advocating instead a national literacy campaign with an even larger budget. She is against the many attempts, however well-intentioned, to make the curriculum relevant to children with very different interests and abilities—"adjusting the schools to the children"—and she is for a structured and disciplined school environment, for more homework, for the tightening of standards, and for a strong emphasis on quality instruction. She insists upon the need for a dedicated faculty of teachers, as committed to academic standards as to the integration of students from very different social backgrounds into a common educational setting.

BY AND LARGE these positions are eminently reasonable and have an attractive simplicity about them. How and if they can be translated into effective educational programs, and whether they ultimately can resuscitate our system of public education, are altogether different questions. In the face of the extraordinary problems confronting America's public schools today, it is obvious that more is needed than simple optimism and declarations of faith in a liberal-arts education. No one knows this better than Diane Ravitch. But she, like others, continues to make the case for pub-

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lic education on the highest ground of political principle. In a society made up of diverse groups, she writes, the primary task for the preparation of citizens falls to the public schools. They, indeed, are the guardians of our common national culture and, perhaps, also our national purpose. It is in line with this thought that Mrs. Ravitch, without denying the role of cultural pluralism in education, reasons against the extension of tuition tax credits to private—or, as their proponents like to call them, non-governmental—schools.

Here, however, we come at last to the Achilles' heel of this fine collection of essays. Mrs. Ravitch's arguments for the public schools are at bottom the arguments of an old-fashioned liberal. Yet to a surprising extent the tangled problems of today's public schools are rooted in the values and concepts of a liberalism that has itself become deeply problematic. If the public schools are *the* liberal institution *par excellence,* their future stands or falls on the ability of liberalism to continue to serve as the integrating myth of American society. Many critics of the schools today question whether the classical liberal values of freedom, fairness, and equality, to which they remain no less committed than does Mrs. Ravitch, are being served by our highly bureaucratized public educational system in which values, content, and style are determined and administered by ever more "professionalized" educators. As a historian, Mrs. Ravitch knows a great deal about the complicated relationship between private values and public institutions. She should also know that without private values there can be no public ethos.

In the current climate of educational reform *The Schools We Deserve* is likely to find a receptive audience: it contains just the right mix of critique, idealism, and common sense. It may even strike a chord of sympathy among some of Mrs. Ravitch's erstwhile adversaries, the progressive establishment that dominates America's public schools and that has vociferously resented her previous attacks on its methods and policies. This is all to the good; but it would have been even better if she had subjected the liberal creed to the rigorous examination it deserves.

Non-Human Rights

IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS. Edited by PETER SINGER. *Basil Blackwell. 224 pp. $16.95.*

Reviewed by RONALD BAILEY

To the numerous "liberation" movements of our times—including the black, chicano, women's, and gay-liberation movements—another must be added that is active not on behalf of any purportedly disadvantaged class or group of people but on behalf of animals. The major theorist of this "animal-liberation" movement is Peter Singer, a professor of philosophy at Monash University in Australia and the author of the movement's seminal book, *Animal Liberation,* published in 1975. In this latest volume, which he edited, Singer brings together fifteen essays by philosophers and movement activists on the subject of animal "rights."

The first and most interesting section of the book is devoted to arguments in favor of according moral standing to animals. The remainder of the book features essays describing a variety of activities which offend animal-rights advocates and which outline the strategies (some quite violent) recently used by some activists to further their cause.

The first essay, "The Case for Animal Rights," by the American philosopher Tom Regan, states that the goals of the animal-rights movement are "the total abolition of the use of animals in science; the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture; and the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping." In Regan's view, all of these activities are morally repugnant because they violate the principle of according inherent value to every "sentient being." Regan asserts that "all who have inherent value have it *equally,* whether they be human animals or not." The adoption of Regan's position would abolish any moral distinctions between animals and human beings.

Singer is not so absolutist. He states that the "animal-liberation movement . . . is *not* saying that all lives are of equal worth or that all interests of humans and other animals are to be given equal weight, no matter what those interests may be." For example, he admits that killing a fish is morally not so reprehensible an act as killing a human being. But, he adds, animal liberationists *are* "saying that where animals and humans have similar interests—we might take the interest in avoiding physical pain as an example, for it is an interest that humans clearly share with other animals—those interests are to be counted equally, with no automatic discount just because one of the beings is not human."

The positions presented by Singer and Regan are by far the more seriously and rigorously argued in this volume. Their fellow essayists for the most part make appeals to sentiment or occupy themselves with polemical diatribes against a variety of activities which they consider violative of the presumed rights of animals. Unless we are persuaded that animals do have rights, the points made by these essays are moot.

REGAN believes that "the fundamental wrong is the system that allows us to view animals as *our resources,* here for *us.* . . ." His argument for the inherent value of animals is an extension of the Kantian moral notion that rational beings should not be treated as means to our satisfaction but as ends in themselves. To Regan, animals "must be viewed as the experiencing subjects of a life, with inherent value of their own." How do we determine inherent value? Both he and Singer believe that the paramount quality is the ability to feel physical pain. Distinctively human characteristics such as language usage, culture-building, or the ability to make and keep promises are dismissed by them as morally irrelevant considerations. After all, we treat very young children and mentally deficient adults with moral respect, so rationality and the ability to use language cannot

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be the basis for claiming a superior status for human beings.

Such arguments by Regan and Singer can easily be seen to be nonsense. We do, in fact, limit the rights and responsibilities of mentally impaired adults and young children. For example, they cannot vote or enter into contracts, and, in the case of mentally deficient adults, they are often confined to institutions where their behavior can be supervised; nor do we punish young children or mentally deranged adults for crimes they commit. Clearly, then, we do take mental abilities into account when making moral decisions on what rights will be accorded to human beings.

Singer and Regan point to the fact that even though children and mentally retarded adults do not meet our usual standards of rationality for moral consideration, we do not sanction killing or performing laboratory experiments on them. This observation is far less morally telling, however, than they suppose. The reasons we treat young children and mentally retarded adults with moral consideration are complex, but they include our deference to the feelings of their family members and, in the case of children, their eventual status as rational beings. Animals do not and cannot share those uniquely human attributes upon which our ethical theories are grounded.

One particularly disturbing aspect of Singer's and Regan's arguments is their facile equation of "speciesism"—the assertion of a superior moral status for human beings—with racism. Racism denies moral treatment to beings who are not merely capable of feeling physical pain, but who share distinctively human characteristics; the comparison Singer and Regan draw totally misses the point of why racism is a moral evil.

In sum, despite Singer's and Regan's claims to the contrary, we accord moral respect to human beings and not to animals because unique human attributes make our experience of the world quite discontinuous from that of animals. (Human beings alone, for example, are capable of being disappointed by a broken promise.) The ability to feel physical pain is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for granting moral consideration to a being. We act morally toward other human beings not just because they are human beings like us, as animal-rights advocates assert, but because they are themselves capable of moral choice and action, something that even animal-rights activists do not claim for animals.

None of this means, of course, that human beings can do whatever they like to animals, or that there are no prudential arguments for preserving the natural environment, including a diverse population of animals, for the benefit and enjoyment of ourselves and our posterity. But the contention that animals have inherent rights is empty.

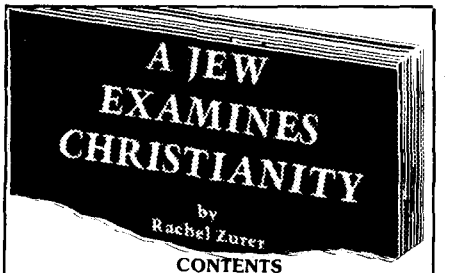
Beyond the Law

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. By RONALD DWORKIN. *Harvard University Press. 425 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by MARY TEDESCHI

ALEXANDER HAMILTON once defended the federal judiciary with the observation that "the possibility of particular mischiefs can never be viewed, by a well-informed mind, as a solid objection to a general principle which is calculated to avoid general mischiefs and to obtain general advantage." Two centuries later, those "particular mischiefs" have come to claim victims as unlikely as a policeman sued, in the words of Judge Richard Posner, "in federal court under a federal civil-rights statute for alienating a dog's affections." Posner is himself an outspoken member of the growing coalition of critics of the federal judiciary—critics who include, among others, parents who object to forced busing; members of any race or sex who object to the use of quotas; religious organizations and their followers who object to being told that they taint the public square; some untold millions who have yet to be persuaded that the Constitution includes a right to abortion; and law-abiding

MARY TEDESCHI *is managing editor of the* Public Interest.



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citizens from all quarters who feel threatened by the proliferation of criminal rights.

Indeed, as the breadth of these issues suggests, if the "populist" or "neopopulist" turn in national politics has a single source at all, it is discontent with the scope and prerogatives of the judicial branch at large and of its nine most conspicuous members in particular. This popular challenge is no mere rumbling; it is a full-blown tempest. The courts themselves are awash in it, burdened with everything from reverse-discrimination suits to a direct challenge from the Justice Department over one of the most important Supreme Court decisions of the century. From ditchwater school districts to the capital itself, backlash proceeds apace.

It does not proceed everywhere, though, and anyone seeking refuge from the popular discontent can find no better sanctuary than the corridors of contemporary legal theory. Here, despite the occasional skirmishes, serenity reigns supreme. The realists had a bad time of it yesterday, and the utilitarians are in for it today—but the parties in question are civil and, what is most important, they are equally deaf to the noise rising up from the streets. With all due respect to this philosophical detachment, however, it does prompt a serious question: what is going on in there?

A PARTIAL answer can be found in the work of Ronald Dworkin, simultaneously professor of law at New York University and professor of jurisprudence at Oxford, and one of the most influential legal theorists now writing. Eight years ago, with the publication of *Taking Rights Seriously*, Dworkin established himself as something of a celebrity, both inside the field of legal theory and out. In the philosophical journal *Ethics*, Dworkin's book was described as "the most significant book on philosophy of law in this decade and surely one of the most interesting of the century," while in the *New York Review of Books* it was hailed as "the most important work in jurisprudence since H.L.A. Hart's *The Concept of Law*" and "the most sophisticated contribution to that subject yet made by an American writer." This was unusual praise for an abstract work on legal theory; but then, *Taking Rights Seriously* was an unusual book.

Taking Rights Seriously began with a twofold assault: on legal positivism, a theory which assumes "that law is made by explicit social practice or institutional decisions," and on its underlying moral theory, utilitarianism, "which holds that law and its institutions should serve the general welfare, and nothing else." The problem with these Benthamite theories, Dworkin argued, is that they neglect "the crucial fact that jurisprudential issues are at their core issues of moral principle, not legal fact or strategy." To remedy that neglect, *Taking Rights Seriously* presented Dworkin's own theory of individual rights, one grounded in the idea that individuals have moral rights against the state that are "prior to" the rights created explicitly by legislation.

These rights, Dworkin argued, must be "discovered" through some combination of moral theory and legal precedent. Unfortunately, since no "mechanical procedure" exists for determining what these rights may be, the act of discovery must begin anew in any particular case. This means, above all, that judges need not feel bound by the traditional dictum that adjudication should be as unoriginal as possible.

THAT is the central argument of *Taking Rights Seriously*, and it runs throughout the new book. Like its predecessor, *A Matter of Principle* is a collection of essays. Seven of the nineteen were first published in the *New York Review of Books*, and most of the rest in assorted legal and academic journals. Unlike *Taking Rights Seriously*, whose essays proceeded schematically, *A Matter of Principle* is loosely divided by subject: the political basis of law; law as interpretation; liberalism and justice; the economic view of law; reverse discrimination; and censorship and a free press. The essays are united in spirit by a sense of urgency ("the ancient argument over whether judges should and do make law is of more practical importance than ever before") and in substance by the distinction, which appeared in nascent form in *Taking Rights Seriously*, between matters of principle and matters of policy.

In the language of the book's introduction, arguments of principle are based on rights; they claim that "particular programs must be carried out or abandoned because of their impact on particular people, even if the community as a whole is somehow worse off as a result." Arguments of policy, on the other hand, are based on goals; they "try to show that the community as a whole would be better off if a particular program were pursued." When principle and policy are harmonious—when, for example, an act of the legislature does not impinge on anyone's rights—then judges can defer to the legislature, and the course of adjudication is smooth. But when conflicts between goals and rights arise, then "policy must yield to principle."

As might be expected from a collection of essays written for different audiences over the course of several years, *A Matter of Principle* does not so much refine this distinction as illustrate its use in a panorama of settings. In the essays on positive and reverse discrimination, for example, Dworkin argues that no principle based on individual rights can be found to conflict with the goal of affirmative action. Thus, rather than deciding wholesale for or against discriminatory measures, "we must judge various programs of affirmative action one by one, by weighing practical costs and benefits."

The distinction is used to similar effect in the essay on nuclear protest, where Dworkin separates civil disobedience based on policy disagreements from disobedience based on principle, and suggests that the law should be enforced leniently, if at all, against protesters who stand on principle. In the concluding section on free speech, Dworkin invokes his distinction to argue generally against censorship and for a free flow of information; free speech, it emerges, can be curtailed, if rarely, because of principle (for example, if it interferes with the right to a

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fair trial), but almost never by considerations of policy—national security being a case in point.

In this protean fashion, *A Matter of Principle* spreads itself, like *Taking Rights Seriously* before it, over vast stretches of philosophy, politics, and jurisprudence. While its arguments are not always consistent—it is never clear, for example, whether adjudication is only "characteristically" a matter of principle, as Dworkin says in one essay, or always a matter of principle, as he seems to suggest in another—Dworkin's new book is guided on the whole by his earlier essays on rights. And that, as a closer inspection of the book's title reveals, creates a problem. What, after all, does Dworkin mean by "principle"? It is a question that requires another. For principles rest on rights, and the rights in turn rest on—well, something.

WHAT does Ronald Dworkin mean by "rights"? What he does not mean is obvious from the outset. He does not mean, for example, that individual rights can be ascertained by anything so ephemeral as the Constitution itself. Above all, they cannot be ascertained by exploring the intentions of the Framers; as he asserts in an essay on "The Forum of Principle": "There is no such thing as the intention of the Framers waiting to be discovered, even in principle. There is only some such thing waiting to be invented."

In fact, as Dworkin explained in *Taking Rights Seriously*, to search for intention at all is to misunderstand the Constitution itself, for any such search must "ignore the direction to face issues of moral principle that the logic of the text demands." That is not to say that Dworkin would have judges ignore the Constitution altogether. Rather, they are to recognize that commitment to the text "presupposes a *prior* commitment to certain principles of political justice which, if we are to act responsibly, must therefore be reflected in the way the Constitution is read and enforced." And foremost among these principles, as he argued in *Taking Rights Seriously*, is the "abstract right to equal concern and respect" which is "fundamental and axiomatic." It is from this general principle of equal treatment that Dworkin derives his rights.

In the course of *A Matter of Principle* these rights come to include: a right to moral independence; a right to break the law; a right to listen (one that is "parasitic upon" the right to speak); a right to have criminal procedures attach the correct importance to the idea of "moral" (as opposed to "bare") harm; a right to a consistent weighing of the importance of said harm; and a right to report what one believes important to one's fellow citizens. General as these formulations are, one should not infer from them that anything can count as a right. Most notably, and as Dworkin argued in *Taking Rights Seriously*, we do not have a general right to liberty. And because we do not, our rights to certain economic liberties, in particular, are at best a matter of doubt.

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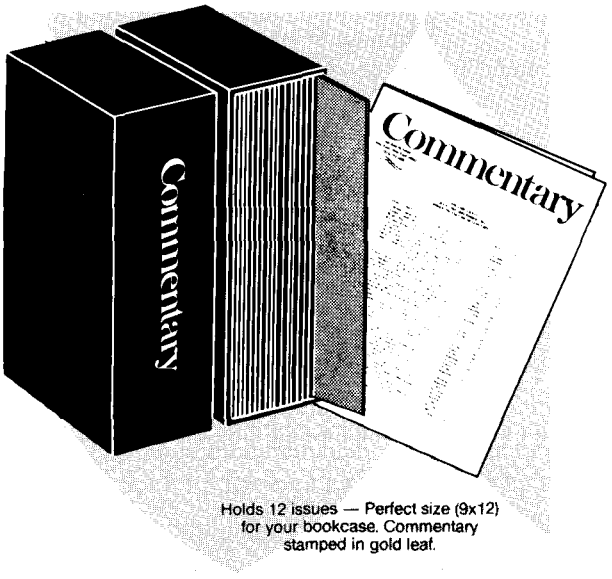

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IF RONALD DWORKIN's rights are beginning to sound suspiciously like the druthers of any Left-leaning intellectual whose political compass points faithfully to the late 1960's, that is exactly what they are. Dworkin's latest book does not betray his political leanings, it trumpets them, from the ominous note on the first page ("the man now President may appoint enough Supreme Court justices to set the character of that commanding institution for a generation") to the very last footnote, which questions the validity of commercial secrets. Political partisanship may seem out of place in a book about "fundamental theoretical issues of political philosophy," but it will come as no surprise to anyone acquainted with Dworkin's first book, whose very purpose was "to define and defend a liberal theory of law," and which toward that end served up not only ideological arguments but also *sotto voce* righteousness about Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew, and conservative critics of the Supreme Court.

In one respect, however, *A Matter of Principle* is an improvement over its predecessor, for it succeeds in establishing—as *Taking Rights Seriously* did not—exactly how narrow Dworkin's conception of liberalism is. Certainly it is narrow enough to exclude many liberals who may not agree with Dworkin's leftist particulars—such as his claim that they are, *qua* liberals, "suspicious of the criminal law," or that they "support procedural constraints and devices . . . that make it difficult to secure criminal convictions."

Dworkin's political partisanship may not have much to do with legal theory, but it has everything to do with the ahistorical bent of his work. What, after all, are Dworkin's subjects in *A Matter of Principle*? Constitutional law? Scarcely any case he mentions predates the Warren Court. Anglo-American jurisprudence? Except for the works of H.L.A. Hart, Dworkin's sources for that tradition are derived almost entirely from contemporary legal and academic journals. Political philosophy? His essays do not betray even passing interest in that tradition of some two millennia. In fact, they do not even betray interest in the founders of classical liberalism themselves, who are, with the notable exception of John Stuart Mill, no more to be found in Dworkin's pages than any other luminaries interred before the late 19th century.

This is not the scholarship of legal theory; it is the scholarship of convenience. Any legal precedent, any abstract argument that does not confirm Dworkin's own political preferences is simply consigned to oblivion. Yet it would be unfair to suggest that he argues in bad faith—on the contrary, his advocacy is (as the saying goes) a matter of principle. To see how this is so, one need only turn to the essay on "Liberalism" in his latest book. Here, it emerges that the principle of equal treatment—which, one recalls, is the principle from which Dworkin's rights flow, and the one which he argues is paramount to adjudication—turns out to be precisely the "nerve" or "central principle" of Dworkin's liberalism itself! That is to say, judges should decide for and against whatever Ronald Dworkin is for and against —not because he is Ronald Dworkin, of course, but because judges should be guided by the same general principle that happens to fuel liberalism (properly understood) itself.

IN THE END, though, it does not matter that Dworkin aspires to political theory while neglecting political theory altogether, and it does not matter that he aspires to legal theory while ignoring any precedents that inconvenience him. What does matter is that insofar as Dworkin's subject is the American judiciary, he is too blind with ideology to understand it. For we do not need a liberal theory of law or adjudication. We do not need partisan attempts to capture the judicial branch of government at all. What we need is some explanation of how that branch, that "least dangerous department," as Hamilton once called it, came in the course of a few decades to intrude on more walks of life than even its most vehement critics could ever have anticipated.

That question is not a matter of ideology; it is a matter of power. Not long ago, a federal court judge ordered a warden to replace every toilet in his prison on the grounds that the plumbing violated criteria of "humane standards." And that order was quite in keeping, for instance, with the Supreme Court's recent decision to prevent the elected government of Alabama from providing students with a moment of respite from their teachers. It was likewise in keeping with *Roe* v. *Wade*, which legalized abortion and which is regarded on all sides as the most sweeping decision in the modern Court's history. All are examples of a federal judiciary whose domain now runs the gamut from the most controversial of moral issues to the most pedestrian of human activities.

It has been some time since a significant number of legal theorists has seen fit to question that domain. Some have merely acquiesced in it; others, like Dworkin, have been pleased enough with the results to advocate its expansion. Now, when the specter of Ronald Reagan looms over an aging Court, they are beginning to understand that the new judicial prerogatives they have defended may become weapons in an enemy's hands. There can be no more appropriate predicament for those legal theorists who have long acted, to paraphrase Hamilton, as if the possibility of a general principle is never to be viewed as a solid objection to whatever particular mischiefs happen to please them.

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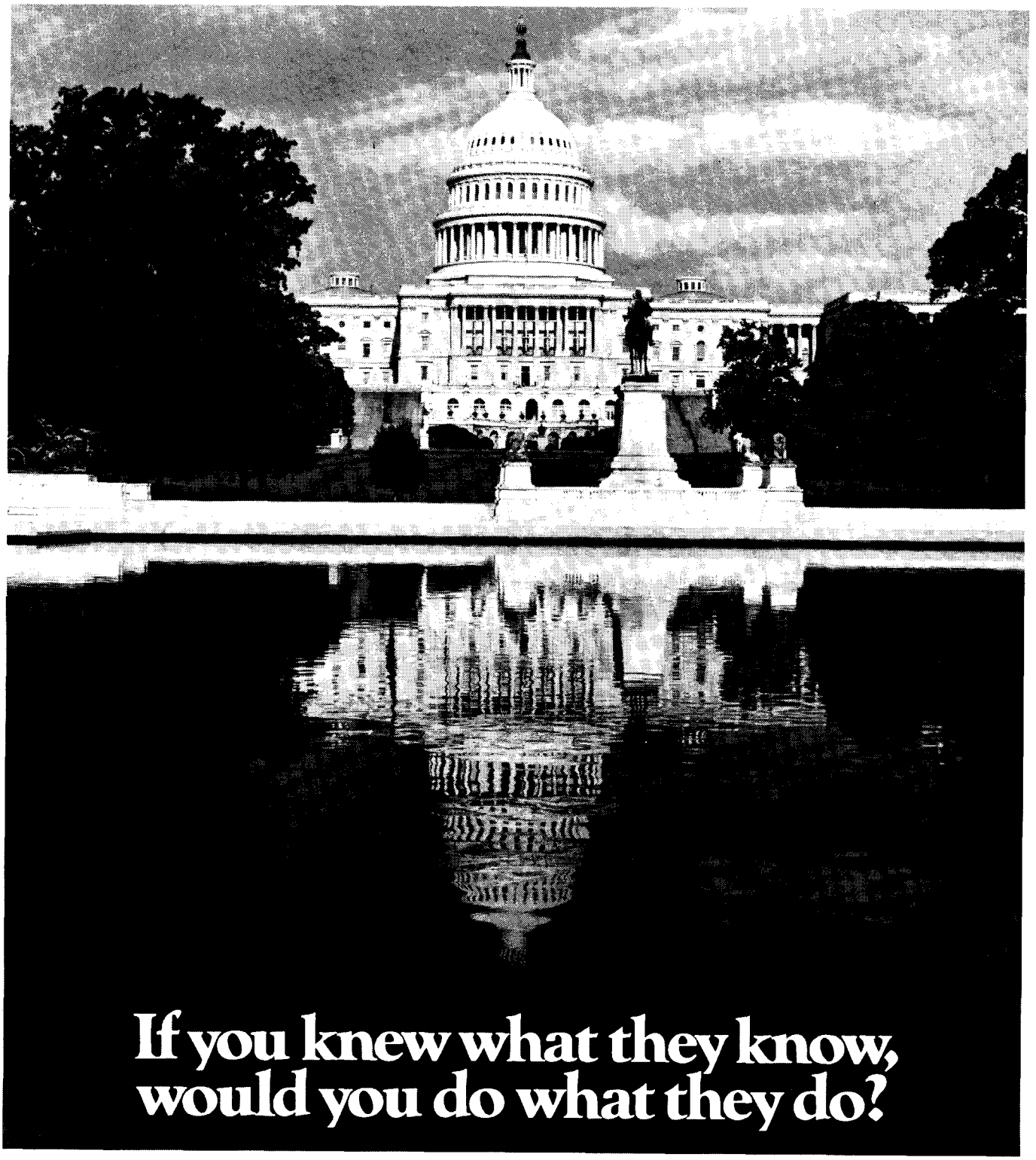

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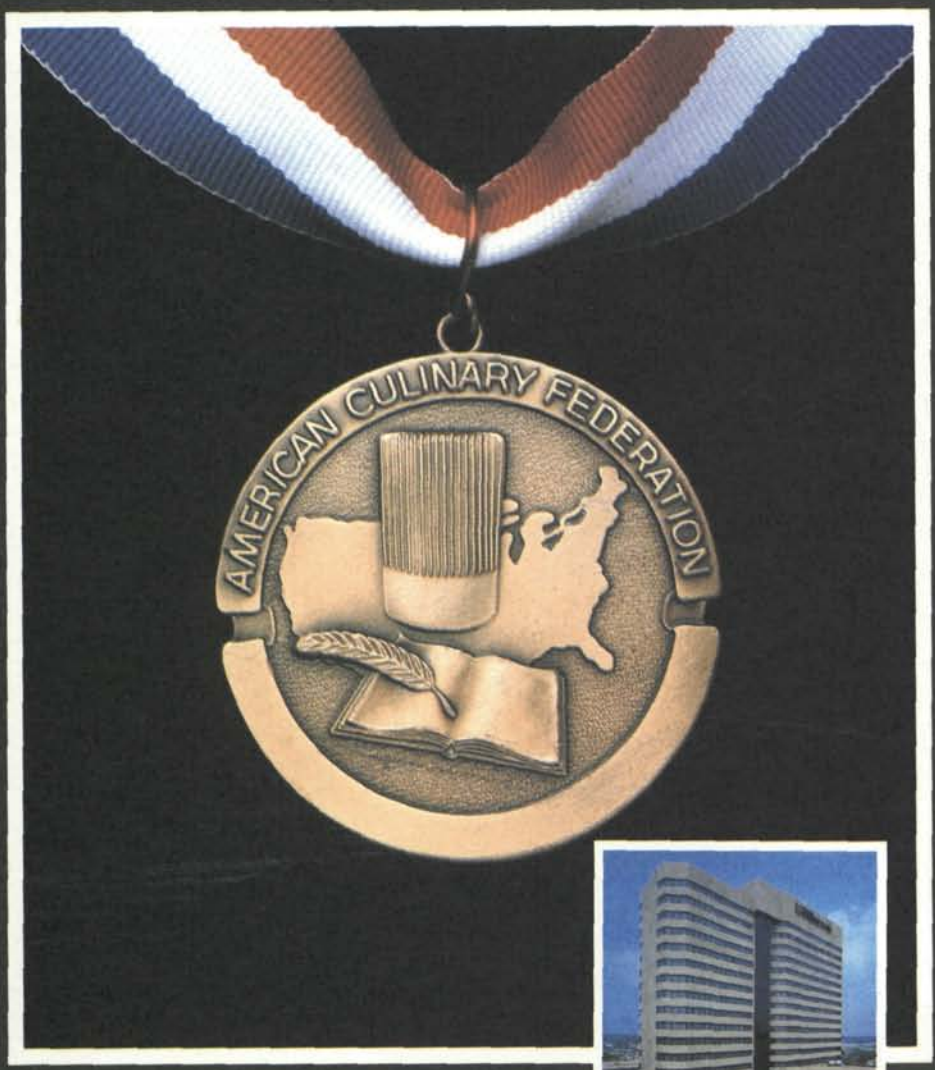

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